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Complete news coverage of all the Pointes

Park keeps its rainy-day fund wet

By Brad Lindberg
Staff Writer

GROSSE POINTE PARK — Municipal leaders set a limit this month on how deep they can dip into the city's financial cookie jar. They set a minimum 15 percent standard for the budget's general fund balance.

Fund balance is a rainy-day fund set aside for emergencies.

"Fund balance is a measurement of available financial resources and is the difference between total assets and total liabilities in each fund," according to a memo prepared by Finance Director Ethan Haan and his assistant.

Fifteen percent was deemed sufficient, should other revenues be interrupted, to operate the city for a reasonable

length of time. "This policy set a requirement of general fund balance to be no lower than about 60 days of reserves," Haan said. "City administration feels this is a good balance combining fiscal responsibility and prioritization of city operations."

He added, "What I like about this is it establishes a floor for our fund balance. I picked 15 percent because it's a good balance between prioritizing city services and spending on projects. We're also keeping the rainy-day fund in case there's an emergency."

The city's auditors reviewed the policy prior to Haan presenting it during the Monday, Dec. 8, city council meeting.

Haan outlined three

See **FUND**, page 2A

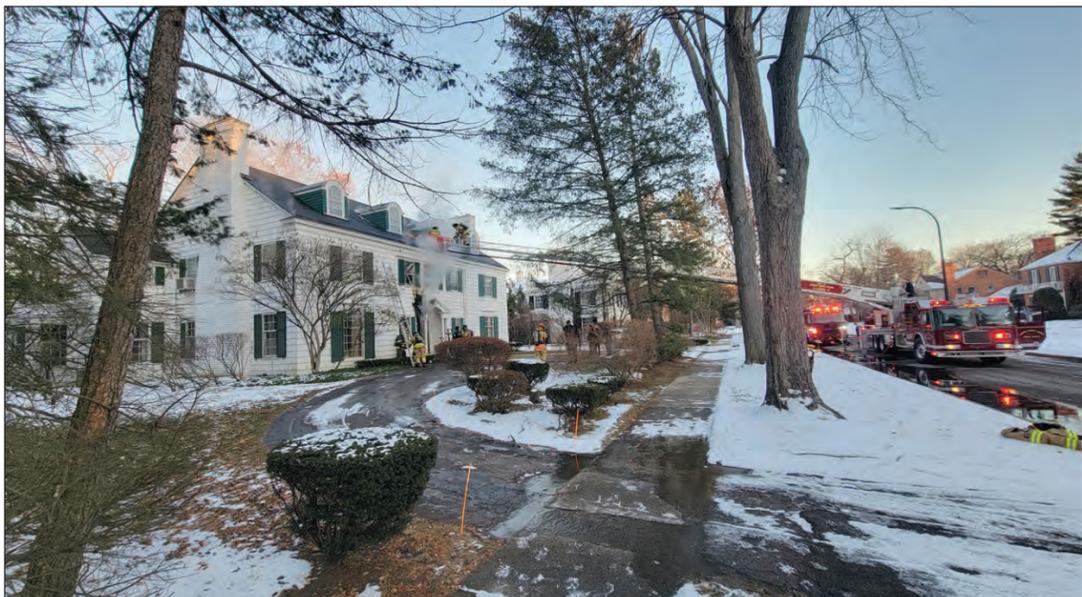


PHOTO COURTESY OF BRIAN DIMMER

Public safety officers from all five Pointes turned out to a recent fire on Vendome in Grosse Pointe Farms.

All 5 Pointes respond to Vendome house fire

By Laurel Kraus
Staff Writer

GROSSE POINTE FARMS — "It was one of those houses where I'm like, 'Oh, we're going to be here all day and it's going to burn to the ground,'" Deputy Director Andy Rogers said, of a house fire that ignited on Vendome around 4:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 4. "That's where we thought it was going."

On the contrary, the fire was fully extinguished within two hours, thanks to the vigilant efforts of officers from all five Pointes, who came together under mutual aid and worked the scene like a single unit: tagging in and out to avoid fatigue,

swapping out oxygen tanks on each other's backs and working together to make a simultaneous aggressive interior and exterior attack on the fire.

it spread to the upstairs bedroom directly above, so that bedroom and part of the hallway was compromised by fire. Firefighting units arrived that afternoon to

woman and her grandson, who reside there together.

Though unharmed, the elderly woman was in such a state of shock she was unable to heed instructions to exit the residence, earning her the full experience of a fireman's carry.

"Lt. Wes Kipke, who was the incident commander in charge of the scene, literally picked her up over his shoulder and ran her outside," Rogers said.

Working together, officers managed to extinguish the fire in about 60 minutes and spent another hour chasing hot spots in the balloon frame construction house.

See **FIRE**, page 2A

"It was absolutely remarkable to see all of the local fire departments working together in such a methodical way to help out a resident of Grosse Pointe Farms."

JOHN GILLOOLY
Grosse Pointe Farms mayor

"Usually it's one or the other, but we had people inside fighting the fire and then also on the outside," Rogers said, "because the bathroom on the first floor was fully engulfed with heavy, heavy flame and

find flames emitting from the left side of the home's front door, where just inside, the fire had ignited within the walls of the first-floor bathroom. Still inside the home were a 93-year-old

officers managed to extinguish the fire in about 60 minutes and spent another hour chasing hot spots in the balloon frame construction house.

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A for audit

By Brad Lindberg
Staff Writer

GROSSE POINTE PARK — The water-sewer fund is liquid.

That unintentional schtick was the only lively thing about the city's annual audit report, where dull means delighted.

"As a recovering auditor, I was bored reading this (audit)," said Councilman Tim Kolar, a state accountant. "That's a good thing."

Auditors of the city for the fiscal year, which ended June 30, reported nothing but good during the city council meeting Monday, Dec. 8.

"It's not hyperbole to celebrate the success we've achieved," Mayor Michele Hodges said.

This is the third consecutive year the firm of Yeo & Yeo was retained to audit the Park.

"On your first year, you indicated we were on at least a three-year journey to get to sustainability and a financial condition

See **AUDIT**, page 8A

MedStar addresses recent delayed responses

By Laurel Kraus
Staff Writer

GROSSE POINTE CITY & FARMS — A 19-minute, 4-second paramedic response time when a woman passed out and hit her head at Fresh Farms Market last month, spurred conversation surrounding the norm and expectation of ambulance response times in the Grosse Pointes.

Four of the Pointes — the City, Farms, Park and

Woods — all contract ambulatory services through MedStar Ambulance. Grosse Pointe Shores separately maintains its own in-house ambulance service through its public safety department.

"We've had a good relationship with MedStar for years now," City of Grosse Pointe Public Safety Director John Alcorn said. "Every once in a while, something will come up and there'll be a

delayed response time and they'll investigate it and try to make corrections if they find something wrong."

Such was the case at Fresh Farms Market Wednesday, Nov. 19, which warranted an internal investigation and report of findings.

According to MedStar's findings, an ambulance was stationed three and a half minutes from Fisher when the 911 call came in. While en route, a sec-

ond call came in and another ambulance was dispatched to an emergency at Grosse Pointe South High School, which is directly across the street from the market on Fisher.

Here's where it went wrong:

A police officer responding to the emergency at South sees the first ambulance approaching and waves

See **DELAYS**, page 5A

GROSSE POINTE HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS





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Pointer of INTEREST

See story, page 4A

Rick McAtee

Home: City of Grosse Pointe
From Classroom to Curios:
A former teacher's political memorabilia haven




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Woods receives clean audit

By Ted O'Neil
Associate Editor

GROSSE POINTE WOODS — City council voted unanimously at its meeting Monday, Dec. 1, to accept the findings of the audit conducted by Plante Moran for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

The city had an unmodified, or clean, audit, which is the highest rating possible.

"We noted no transactions entered into by the city during the year for which there is a lack of authoritative guidance or consensus," Plante Moran said in a letter to council. "There are no significant transactions that have been recog-

nized in the financial statements in a different period than when the transaction occurred."

Mayor Art Bryant said not only was the audit clean, but Plante Moran had no recommendations for the city to follow regarding accounting practices.

The city also received a Certificate of Achievement in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada. It's the 52nd consecutive year the Woods has been recognized by the GFOA, the longest such streak in the organization's history.

"I'm really proud of our

staff," Bryant said. "We couldn't ask for a better result and we've had a good record for many years."

Additionally, GFOA awarded the city a Popular Annual Financial Reporting Award for the 12th consecutive year. It is given to local governments that successfully extract information from their annual comprehensive financial report and produce a high-quality report specifically designed to be readily accessible and easily understandable to the general public and others who do not have a background in public finance.

Plante Moran also noted the city's legacy

costs. While its pension fund is 70 percent funded, its liability increased 6.3 percent, or \$4.2 million. Its OPEB (other post-employment benefits) fund is 10 percent funded.

"It sounds low, but it's considered funded enough," Bryant said. "It's in good shape and has been going up every year."

The city had \$27.3 million in revenue for the year, with property taxes accounting for 71 percent of that, and expenditures of \$24.3 million. Its \$9.3 million fund balance, 45 percent, is well above the 10 to 15 percent the GFOA recom-

Seawall work could start next month

By Brad Lindberg
Staff Writer

GROSSE POINTE PARK

— A seawall with holes is as useless as a screen door on a submarine.

The wall designed to keep waves from jostling boats moored at the Windmill Pointe Park marina is so gap-toothed it needs between \$500,000 and \$1.1 million of work to put a smile on the faces of mariners. The differential reflects the range of bids contractors submitted to fix things.

"The whole wall moves," said Tom Fraser, harbor master.

Boats docked on piers four and five, closest to the entrance to Lake St. Clair, are most susceptible to storm surges.

"This is a safety item at this point," Fraser said. "We saved two boats from sinking this summer. We saved four boats from sinking last summer."

Fraser said seven firms answered invitations to review the site and submit bids. Four followed through with offers. One, low-bidder E.C. Korneffel Co., located in Trenton, hit the sweet spot by retaining a marine surveying firm to help analyze needs.

"I want a permanent fix," Fraser said. "We decided the best (and) least expensive way to do it is to put a wall on the inside and outside of the existing wall, tie-rod-rod it together through the middle, compressing it, filling it with aggregate and fencing to keep the aggregate in, then capping it with a six-inch concrete top."

Chad Craig, director of parks and recreation,

helped convince city council this week to retain Korneffel at a cost not to exceed \$512,000.

"This proposal encapsulates the existing deteriorated wave attenuation wall," according to Korneffel's bid.

"It is great to see city council recognize the enormous value of investing in the infrastructure of our waterfront parks," said Ben Wixson, commodore of the Grosse Pointe Sail Club, based at Windmill.

General taxpayers are off the hook for the project, but are expected to benefit indirectly.

"Long before I became a boater, it was a tour of Windmill Pointe Park with my real estate agent that convinced my wife and me to choose Grosse Pointe Park instead of a neighborhood along the Woodward corridor," Wixson said. "Our parks are truly one of the community's greatest assets. I appreciate the diligence behind this effort and the long-term commitment to maintaining the quality of our waterfront spaces."

"Funds are coming from the marina fund," Councilman Tom Caulfield said.

"It's all being paid by well-holders," Mayor Michele Hodges said.

Company Vice President Graham Korneffel estimated repairs require around 300 linear feet of steel sheet piling, 1,250 tons of stone backfill and up to \$1,500 man hours of labor at \$90 per hour. Deployed to the site also will be a barge and the company's pint-sized, 25-foot tugboat.

"They can start as

See SEAWALL, page 4A



Public safety officers worked in tandem to get the fire under control.

FIRE:

Continued from page 1A

"These old houses, that's why they go up," Rogers said. "There's no fire stops anywhere between floors. Now (with) modern day construction, you have fire stops, so fire gets held back for a little bit. It's not going to stop it altogether, but it will confine it to one area. But these old houses, behind your walls, it's just a straight channel up, so that's how these fires spread so quickly."

The "all departments on deck" fire scene extended to city leadership with newly elected Mayor John Gillooly coming out to make sure the departments had the support they needed and City Manager Shane Reeside at one point directing Kercheval traffic around fire hoses.

"It was absolutely remarkable to see all of the local fire departments working together in such a methodical way to help out a resident of Grosse Pointe Farms," Gillooly said.



PHOTOS BY RENEE LANDUYT

The fire was contained to the front portion of the house.

"The way their trucks were positioned, the way they were helping each other with oxygen tanks and putting holes in a roof and things of that nature. ... It was really something to be seen.

"It was a very significant old house. It could

have been much, much, much worse than it was."

Thanks to these concerted efforts, the fire was contained to the front portion of the Vendome home. The house also sustained heavy smoke damage, but structurally is intact.

"Directly next to the room that was on fire, there is a living room and if you walk in, other than smoke damage, it was totally untouched," Rogers said. "It was one

of those bizarre things where there's a rug and a grand piano and a really nice laid-out living room ... and the next room over is completely destroyed."

Sgt. Kris Desmadryl, the department's fire inspector, reported the cause of the fire was undetermined as of press time, due to many potential contributing factors near the point of origin; however, foul play and arson have been ruled out.

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Woods hands out beautification awards

GROSSE POINTE WOODS — Some 13 homeowners, six businesses and four volunteer groups were recognized by the city's Beautification Advisory Commission last month.



Left, John Vance and Katelyn Deem of Inspired Dental stand with Mayor Art Bryant. Below, Inspired Dental.

PHOTO BY RENEE LANDUYT



COURTESY PHOTO



Above, 1251 S. Renaud. Left, John and Mary Tocco of 1251 S. Renaud stand with Mayor Art Bryant.

PHOTO BY RENEE LANDUYT



COURTESY PHOTO



Left, Girl Scout Troop 77262 garden. Below, Claire Doyle and Susie Brummelte of Girl Scout Troop 77262 with Mayor Art Bryant. The troop won for its Adopt-a-Garden.

COURTESY PHOTO



PHOTO BY RENEE LANDUYT

Other residential winners were Dr. Elaine Kress, Paul and Diane Richards, Philip and Deanna Miller, Tyler and Shelby Masters, Mark and Julia Kline, Jim and Val Champine, Linda Janson, Mark and Linda Rupersburg, Thomas and Cheryl Teetaert, Allen Herfi and Laila Shehadah, Julie Rajzer and David and Diane Battani. Business awards went to Mi Nails, Crispelli's, Da Edoardo, Molly and Me and Moehring Woods Flowers. Adopt-a-Garden recognitions went to The Pointe is Native, Linda Elich and family and Jan Hrabovsky and Fran O'Brien.

Assailant gets 2 to 15

DETROIT — A sexual assault case in circuit court ended this week with the defendant sent to prison for two to 15 years.

Defendant Darren Bradford, 25, of Berkley, received the sentence in Oakland County Circuit Court for sexually assaulting a 15-year-old Grosse Pointe Park girl Feb. 5, in a car on Windmill Pointe Drive near Berkshire.

Investigation by Berkley police led to reports of numerous minors frequenting Bradford's apartment. He also faces charges of allegedly sexually assaulting teens in Berkley and Bloomfield Township.

While being held in the Oakland County Jail, police in Grosse Pointe Park learned about an

alleged sexual assault that happened in their jurisdiction. Bradford allegedly assaulted the 15-year-old in his vehicle in February, the same day Berkley police received a tip about teens at his apartment, according to media reports.

During a preliminary hearing in Park Municipal Court last

March, Judge Carl Jarboe denied a request by Bradford's attorney to reduce his \$250,000 bond.

The day after the Park hearing, Oakland County Prosecutor Karen D. McDonald announced charges against Bradford for the same type of crime in Bloomfield Township.

"Bradford is alleged to have been known to

See ASSAILANT, page 9A

The Week Ahead

MONDAY, DEC. 15

- ◆ Grosse Pointe Woods City Council meeting, 7 p.m.
- ◆ Grosse Pointe Farms City Council special meeting, 7 p.m.
- ◆ City of Grosse Pointe City Council meeting, 7 p.m.

TUESDAY, DEC. 16

- ◆ Grosse Pointe Shores City Council meeting, noon.



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A house full of history

Pointer has prized presidential memorabilia collection

By Anne Gryzenia
Publisher

Rick McAtee, a retired teacher and longtime history buff, has spent the last decade building a collection. Inspired by his years teaching social studies in elementary and middle schools, he has amassed a highly curated collection that spans generations. Thousands of political items are meticulously organized and placed around the McAtee home, from early campaign pieces to modern-day slogans. He's quick to clarify one thing: This isn't about party loyalty.

"It's got nothing to do with favoring any party," he said. "I'm just a guy who likes history."

That same mindset is shared by the community he discovered about 10 years ago: APIC, the American Political Items Collectors. Among the group's strictest rules also is the simplest: originals only.

"You can't really do this wrong," he explained, "except you've got to have original stuff."

Reproductions exist — and often are sold in presidential museum gift shops — but for collectors like McAtee, authenticity is the point. Every scratch, pin back and fading ribbon is part of the story.

McAtee's interest in history may have been shaped by his teaching career, but one moment really stands out as an important event in his life. In May 1963, a few months before his assassination, President John F. Kennedy traveled to Vanderbilt University and McAtee attended the event with his parents. He remembers well the open limousine, the temporary wooden stage on the 50-yard line and the president shaking hands with veterans from World War I, World War II, the Korean War and early Vietnam War. When the event ended, McAtee made a bold move and ran toward the action.

"I told my parents, I said I'm going to run out to the platform," he recalled. "Who would ever believe I got up on that stage? Nobody stopped me."



He didn't actually get to shake JFK's hand that day, he admits, but he got close enough to feel the reality of it: the face, the posture, the presence Kennedy possessed. For a high school student who eventually filled his home with the evidence of American public life, it was a moving brush with history.

Of the thousands of items he holds dear, one of McAtee's favorite finds is a pair of 1952 campaign cigarette packs, printed for the presidential race between Dwight D. Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson. The idea, he explained, was that the press marketed the cigarettes nationwide and tracked which candidate "sold" more packs — essentially turning tobacco sales into a bizarre election barometer.

"It's unbelievable," he said. "Can you believe mankind knew so little about smoking that the candidates allowed it?"

As it turns out, Eisenhower won the election — and sold the most cigarettes.

Also in McAtee's home are items that document politics through protest, like a group of original Watergate buttons. McAtee's point isn't to argue the case; it's to preserve the cultural artifact. Loving or disliking a



COURTESY PHOTOS

Left, Rick McAtee poses among his collection holding in one hand a photo of FDR and in the other a Ronald Reagan collectible. Above, McAtee sits among his political button collection.

president, he says, doesn't determine what belongs. If it's a real piece of the moment, it matters.

McAtee recently acquired a small Brussels-made souvenir ashtray modeled after a famous European statue of a little boy. The twist? It was produced after World War II and sold to Allied troops as a novelty — depicting the boy urinating on Hitler.

"I did not know this existed," he said. "I had never seen this, never heard of it."

The collection's humor doesn't stop there: He has nesting dolls featuring figures from the Clinton era; tongue-in-cheek campaign slogans; and artifacts that reflect the constant blend of celebrity, scandal and politics the public has

always devoured.

Other than his APIC connections, a lot of McAtee's treasure hunting happens the way it does for many metro Detroiters: estate sales, antique fairs and the occasional "you won't believe what's in the basement" moment.

"More people have something than you'd think," he said.

He's learned to ask, to look, to follow the thread. And after 10 years of collecting, he has no intention of stopping anytime soon.

The McAtees have lived in the City of Grosse Pointe for 13 years, happy to be near their

son and granddaughters. Both McAtee and his wife, Jenny, were lifelong teachers who met and worked in the L'Anse Creuse school district.

Though Rick McAtee is the official collector, his wife knows a fair bit about the memorabilia as well. She has spotted several of the items that reside in their home on their treasure hunts and "puts up" with the political theme their living room has taken on.

When they're not busy collecting, the McAtees enjoy time well spent with family, being able to walk into town and dining at their favorite restaurant, Da Edoardo.



Left, McAtee with part of his vast collection, wearing a pin given to him by a friend. Above, a small portion of the political memorabilia that decorates McAtee's home.

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SEAWALL: five. The west seawall is in need of permanent repair."

Korneffel representatives submitted their bid based in part by visiting the site and consulting with Hennessey Engineers, a surveying firm.

"They completed phases of reconstruction at the Grosse Pointe Yacht Club and understand the type of conditions this seawall will face with its given location on Lake St. Clair and the large vessel traffic and surges that are created from those vessels," Craig said. "It is anticipated that repairs can be completed within one to two months, weather dependent."

He said the contractor posted a performance bond and pledged to complete construction before the marina's scheduled opening April 15.

"Multiple sections of sheeting are missing or broken off of the west seawall at the entrance to the marina, along with main connections that are broken, which allow the entire wall to move," Craig said. "The wall is currently unable to protect the marina from surges that primarily affect piers four and

DELAYS:

Continued from page 1A

the paramedics into the high school. The paramedics assume the officer knows where they ought to be, turn in and begin treating the patient.

The second ambulance, which was correctly dispatched to the high school, arrives and that's when the confusion sets in.

Meanwhile, officers across the street at Fresh Farms Market are calling MedStar's dispatch center asking where their unit is.

When the error becomes clear, one unit still must load back all its

equipment into the ambulance to take it across the street.

MedStar CEO Kolby Miller called the incident "a fluke error."

"There would never be a time we wouldn't follow the direction of a police officer waving us in," he said. "... In this situation, you've got simultaneous calls received a minute apart from each other and the crew was just waved in to the wrong call."

The miscommunication was further complicated by the fact Fisher is the border street between the City and Farms, meaning each 911 call came in through a different jurisdiction.

"The officer who's waving the ambulance in isn't even aware there's another emergency in the other jurisdiction, because he or she wouldn't know of it from their radio," Miller added.

Another report of an elongated response time in October to the Country Club of Detroit for someone fainting in the tavern further raised eyebrows.

MedStar reported a 16-minute response time, while Farms public safety logged the ambulance arriving in 18 minutes.

Miller said its cause was multiple area emergencies occurring at the same time.

One ambulance already

was on another call in the Farms and as a second ambulance was en route coming from Henry Ford St. John Hospital, it was diverted to a higher-priority emergency. A third unit then was dispatched from some distance away.

MedStar uses a national prioritization for call type, diverting closer units to more serious calls such as chest pain or life-threatening injuries. For calls lower on the scale, patients may have to wait for a unit coming from further away. Units also will not use lights and sirens for such calls as the risk of getting into an accident outweighs

what the patient's condition warrants.

"Even though they're coming from a distance, we still don't tell them to turn their lights and siren on and go through intersections, because that's extremely risky," Miller said.

Farms City Manager Shane Reeside said a response time exceeding eight minutes does happen periodically.

"I would say it's relatively infrequent," he added, "but I think we've had two or three that have exceeded that timeframe in this year that we're aware of. And so it's investigating why that happened and often it

can be just the nature of the call."

This year to date, Miller reported, the average MedStar emergency response time in the four Grosse Pointes is four minutes, 15 seconds, while the average non-emergency response time is seven minutes, 12 seconds.

MedStar is contracted within the four Grosse Pointes to have one ambulatory unit, as well as an additional unit during the day periods when it's busier. The cities also benefit, Miller said, from additional units often being dispatched from Henry Ford St. John Hospital.

Grosse Pointe Park

Plate stolen

Someone's driving around the area in a vehicle displaying someone else's license plate.

The plate's owner discovered it missing from his vehicle the morning after parking in the area of Maryland and Charlevoix Saturday, Nov. 29.

Cars entered

An outdoor home security video system recorded two dark-clothed, unidentified subjects at 3:05 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 6, rifling through unlocked vehicles parked in the 700 block of Westchester.

Also that night in the same block, a woman reported \$10 in change stolen from her unlocked 2022 Kia parked in front of a house.

Warrants

A Detroit female motorist of unreported age was arrested last week for amassing \$1,000 in outstanding traffic warrants in the jurisdiction.

An officer reported pulling her over at 1:19 p.m. Friday, Dec. 5, because she was speeding 51 mph on Mack near Alter, a 30-mph zone.

—Brad Lindberg
Report information about these and other crimes to the Grosse Pointe Park Public Safety Department, (313) 822-7400.

Grosse Pointe Farms

Set of tires

A Chevrolet Traverse missing all four tires was located via OnStar on Bewick in Detroit after it was stolen from the 400 block of McKinley overnight into Tuesday, Dec. 2.

PUBLIC SAFETY REPORTS

A neighbor's security cameras picked up a dark-colored sedan, possibly a Hyundai, driving up to his home at 3:30 a.m. that night and attempting to open his locked car door before continuing down the street.

Pass the remote

A BournemOUTH homeowner declined to press charges after a landscaper with whom she was familiar came to give her a quote for painting, but appeared to be intoxicated and later was found to have placed her Roku remote in his coat pocket.

Muffler

A loud muffler gained a 22-year-old Detroit man a citation for a suspended license as he drove along Mack at 3:42 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 3.

Chef service

The day after ordering dinner via PayPal from a chef service in Grosse Pointe Park last week, a 76-year-old Farms man was alerted to two fraudulent charges totaling \$3,295 from his account and debited by the same account number as the authorized charge to the chef.

The man said he has used the service several times before without incident.

Catalytic converter stolen

The catalytic converter was stolen from a 2005 Honda CR-V while parked in the Henry Ford Medical Center parking garage between 9 and 10 a.m. Friday, Dec. 5.

Crime of opportunity

A black Cadillac XTS was stolen from a driveway in the 400 block of Elizabeth Court between 6:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 6, and 2 a.m. the next morning.

The vehicle had been left unlocked with the key fob inside.

—Laurel Kraus
Report information about these and other crimes to Grosse Pointe Farms Public Safety, (313) 885-2100.

Grosse Pointe Woods

Stolen vehicles

A work van was stolen from a driveway in the 2300 block of Allard around 3 p.m. Monday, Dec. 1. Also taken were plumbing supplies and the contractor's wallet containing identification and credit cards.

A 2015 Honda left running and unattended in the 19200 block of Mack was stolen around 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 4. A suspect later was arrested in Detroit.

Larceny

The infotainment system was stolen from a Dodge Ram in the 20000 block of E. Williams Court sometime before 11 p.m. Monday, Dec. 1.

—Ted O'Neil
Report information about these and other crimes to Grosse Pointe Woods Public Safety, (313) 343-2400.

City of Grosse Pointe

Check fraud

A black woman in her

early 20s attempted to cash a fraudulent \$1,500 check at a Notre Dame bank at 1:45 p.m. Monday, Dec. 1. An investigation is ongoing.

Anti-aging

An older white man stole four bottles of Olay Super Serum, totaling \$170, from a store in the 17000 block of Kercheval at 4:30 p.m. Monday, Dec. 1. An investigation is ongoing.

Clothing theft

Detectives are looking for a thin, white man with facial tattoos and in his mid 30s who walked out of a Village clothing store with \$1,800 worth of various clothes at 5:35

p.m. Thursday, Dec. 4.

Fraud

A suspect was reported for fraud for using his Dearborn Credit Union account to pay a \$6,900 bill at Taplan Services Friday, Dec. 5.

HOA

It was discovered last week an unknown person made four fraudulent withdrawals from a local homeowners' association totaling approximately \$4,000.

Diaper theft

A woman stole \$43 worth of diapers, baby wipes and children's cough syrup from a store

in the 17000 block of Kercheval at 10:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 5.

—Laurel Kraus
Report information about these and other crimes to the City of Grosse Pointe Public Safety, (313) 886-3200.

Grosse Pointe Shores

Close call

A Hawthorne resident told officers someone entered his vehicle but did not take anything overnight into Tuesday, Dec. 2.

—Ted O'Neil
Report information about this and other crime to Grosse Pointe Shores Public Safety, (313) 881-5500.



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Grosse Pointe News

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OUR VIEW

A shopping we will go

Despite rising prices for practically everything else in life, holiday spending is expected to set a new record this year.

According to the National Retail Federation, spending is expected to increase by 3.7 percent to 4.2 percent over last year. That translates to \$1.01 trillion to \$1.02 trillion. Yes, you read that right. Trillion, with a “t.”

Spending last year clocked in at \$976.1 billion, a 4.3 percent increase over 2023.

NRF Chief Economist and Executive Director of Research Mark Mathews put it this way, “The economy has continued to show surprising resilience in a year marked by trade uncertainty and persistent inflation. As tariffs have induced an uptick in consumer prices, retailers have tried to hold the line on prices given the uncertainty about trade policies.”

To get ready for all that shopping, retailers expected to hire between 265,000 and 365,000 seasonal workers. That is a decrease, however, from the 442,000 hired in 2024.

And how will that money be spent?

A survey by NerdWallet.com indicates that 82 percent of Americans plan to buy Christmas gifts this year. They plan to spend, on average, \$1,107 on presents. That is an increase of \$182 over last year.

But we all know the Pointes usually are above average. According to our reader poll (far right), 42 percent of respondents plan to spend more than \$1,200. Another 11 percent will spend between \$800 and \$1,200, and 14 percent will spend \$500 to \$800. A third says they plan to spend up to \$500.

Topping our wish list this year is the hope that much of that shopping will be done locally, be it in The Village, on The Hill, along Mack or on lower Kercheval.

As Cindy Willcock, executive director of Main Street Grosse Pointe, put it in her Guest View last month:

“We’ve been conditioned to believe that convenience lives in a cardboard box on our doorstep. But true convenience is walking into a store, trying something on, getting honest feedback and walking out with exactly what you need. No guesswork, no returns, no disappointment. When we default to online giants, we’re not just risking a fashion faux pas. We’re missing out on the human connection that makes our communities thrive. We’re bypassing the businesses that sponsor our kids’ sports teams, decorate their windows for the holidays and show up for local causes without being asked.”

Our reader poll (right) found nearly half of respondents said they would do all (12 percent) or as much as possible (36 percent) of their holiday shopping locally. Another 24 percent said they would do half locally, while 29 percent said hardly any.

Thanks to the generosity of two local businesses and one city council, there is one less excuse to not shop local.

For the third year in a row, edmund t. AHEE Jewelers is reimbursing Grosse Pointe Woods to cover all parking meters in the city through the end of the year. For the second consecutive year, Pearl is doing the same along Kercheval on The Hill in Grosse Pointe Farms through Christmas.

In the City of Grosse Pointe, all off-street surface parking lots are free Saturdays and Sundays through Christmas. In addition, all parking in The Village — including off-street lots, the parking structure and on-street spaces — is free after 6 p.m. daily through the end of the year. The same applies to Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day.



PHOTO BY RENEE LANDUYT

Pure GP

Attention, kiddos: If you’re heading down Lakeshore with Mom or Dad and you happen to see the brightly decorated house at the corner of Moross, don’t forget to bring your letters to Santa! Santa’s bright red mailbox sits right on the front driveway of the house. If you put your name and address on the letter, Santa will write you a letter back!

As far as that holiday spending, just be careful.

NerdWallet found 31 percent of shoppers still are paying off credit card debt associated with gifts they purchased in 2024. The same percentage also applies to those paying off debt from holiday travel last year.

For holiday travelers, there are savings to be had by flying on non-peak days and staying with loved ones instead of hotels or rental homes.

Some cheap ... er, savvy ... shoppers told NerdWallet they plan to buy some gifts second-hand (10 percent) or regift (7 percent). If you go with the latter, just make sure you do not regift something to the person who originally gave it to you.

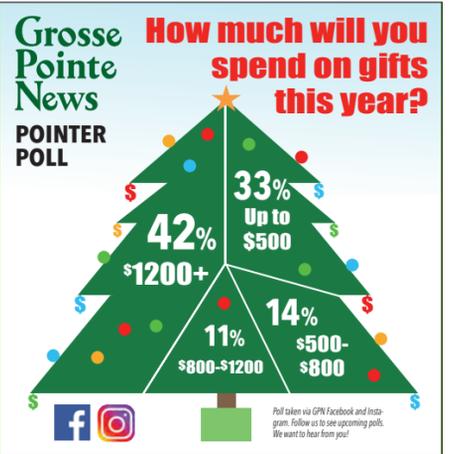
If you are up in the air trying to decide what gifts to give, we have the answer. Every week, our very own Anna Lyzer reviews all sorts of different products in our “We Tried It!” feature, usually found on page 3C (It’s on 2C this week). Recent examples include a stylish winter hat that is not itchy and leaves hair looking good, an electric balloon inflator and a headache cap.

Of course, you also need something to put all those presents under. Another poll of ours found 39 percent of respondents only go with real Christmas trees. Another 30 percent go the fake route and 31 percent use a mix. Given the size of many houses around here, we are not surprised people would have more than one tree.

And finally, when to decorate?

A frightening 54 percent of our respondents said any time after Halloween. Obviously retailers starting to sell Christmas decorations and play Christmas music so early is having the subliminal effect for which they are looking.

Another 23 percent said not until Dec. 1, with 21 percent at least waiting until after Thanksgiving. Just 2 percent said they are lucky to decorate by Christmas Eve. We can empathize.



LETTERS

The Grosse Pointe News welcomes letters to the editor. All letters should be typed and signed with the writer’s full name and local address, as well as a daytime telephone number for verification or questions. Letters longer than 300 words may be edited for length. All letters may be edited for content. We reserve the right to refuse any letter. The deadline for letters is 3 p.m. Monday. Letters may be submitted via email to editor@grossepointenews.com or by filling out the letters form on our website, grossepointenews.com.

Thank you

To the community:

It is with heartfelt gratitude that we express our sincere thanks to Director Nick Marinello and the incredible cast and crew of Grosse Pointe Theatre’s production of Irving Berlin’s “White Christmas.” The commitment, talent and generosity of this amazing group of people — all volunteers — have been unwavering.

It was devastating to hear four days before the cast and crew were scheduled to open this production that they would not be able to perform this beautiful show, due to unforeseen obstacles causing construction delays at the Schaaap Center. After planning for a year, bringing together an extremely creative production crew, holding auditions and rehearsing with the talented cast since August, Nick and his team became a family. Having to cancel an entire production is news a director never wants to deliver.

After processing the emotions and accessing next steps, we could not help but reflect on the beautiful story of “White Christmas” and its inspiring message of coming together as a community to lift, celebrate and honor each other, even in challenging times. It is in that same spirit we recognize and honor Nick and his dedicated cast and crew; our generous show sponsors; our wonderful volunteers, staff, patrons, veterans and their families; and Paul and Carol Schaaap, and Richard and Jane Manoogian, for their incredible generosity and for believing in Grosse Pointe Theatre and the other arts organizations that will share the beautiful Schaaap Center once it’s completed.

Although we cannot bring our production of Irving Berlin’s “White Christmas” to the Schaaap stage at this time, we can still share its message of kindness and community through our actions. Kindness and

See LETTERS, page 7A



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GROSSE POINTE 7-DAY WEATHER FORECAST

December 11 – 17

LOCAL 4

THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED
28° 14°	27° 13°	20° 7°	25° 6°	45° 32°	32° 28°	41° 32°
Mostly Cloudy	Chance Snow	Snow Showers	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Cloudy
10%	40%	20%	10%	20%	10%	30%
SUNRISE 7:40 am SUNSET 4:56 pm	SUNRISE 7:41 am SUNSET 4:54 pm	SUNRISE 7:43 am SUNSET 4:52 pm	SUNRISE 7:44 am SUNSET 4:51 pm	SUNRISE 7:45 am SUNSET 4:49 pm	SUNRISE 7:46 am SUNSET 4:48 pm	SUNRISE 7:47 am SUNSET 4:46 pm

Weather data courtesy of Channel 4, WDIV Detroit • ClickOnDetroit.com

I SAY By Laurel Kraus



Straight to the source of Christmas

Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

“(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

“And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

“To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

“And so it was, that,

while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

“And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

“And the angel said unto them, ‘Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

“And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.’

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth

peace, good will toward men.’

“And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, ‘Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.’

“And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

“And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

“And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

“But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

“And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

“And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.”

YESTERDAY'S HEADLINES

1950

75 years ago this week

PARK, WOODS APPROVE CHARTERS: Grosse Pointe Park and Grosse Pointe Woods approved city charters and elected officials to guide the new independent city governments at special elections Monday, Dec. 11. Voters in Grosse Pointe Park approved the charter by a 1,561 to 226 count. In Grosse Pointe Woods, the charter was accepted by 2,262 to 1,371.

UNCONSCIOUS MOTHER, THREE CHILDREN RESCUED IN FIRE: A mother and her three children who had been trapped in the bedrooms of the smoke-infested home were rescued by Grosse Pointe Park firemen early Monday morning. The

dramatic rescue saw firemen break through the second-floor bedroom of Mrs. Madeline Riff. Firemen carried her down the ladder. Her children also were carried to safety.

F A R M S SUBDIVISION SUIT ACTED UPON BY SUPREME COURT: The long battle between Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Murdock and Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Babcock and their C. W. Babcock Organization has been punctuated by an opinion handed down by the Michigan State Supreme Court. The opinion reverses a decision handed down in Circuit Court last May which favored the Babcocks. The battle has to do with building restrictions in the Moross-Chalfont area. The Murdocks bought a home there last year.

1975

50 years ago this week

TACKLE TRAFFIC PROBLEM: The Woods Council and the Department of Public Safety have taken action in an attempt to alleviate the traffic problem on Brys Drive and Old Eight Mile Road, between Harper and Mack, where citizens have sought relief from heavy vehicular traffic on their streets.

ANXIOUS FAMILY AWAITS CONTACT WITH ABDUCTORS: An anxious Grosse Pointe family is still waiting for a direct response from the kidnapers who abducted James Crawford, of The City, outside a west side Detroit bank on Dec. 5. Although local media have broadcast numerous appeals to the kidnapers, as of press time, their only response

has been through intermediaries in the community. Mr. Crawford, 25, was apparently forced into a car at 8:30 a.m. on Friday behind the Michigan and Junction Branch of the National Bank of Detroit, where he is an assistant manager.

2000

25 years ago this week

GP SCHOOLS JOIN PROPOSED JOINT RECREATION AGENCY: The Grosse Pointe Board of Education has pledged the support of the Grosse Pointe Public School System to join a proposed eight-body joint commission to look into forming an intergovernmental agency to serve the recreational needs of the five Grosse Pointes and Harper Woods. The board's Dec. 4 meeting was Neighborhood Club

executive director John Bruce's second stop in sharing the highlights of the Neighborhood Club-sponsored master recreation plan with the municipalities and school districts of the five Grosse Pointes and Harper Woods and to call for representation on a joint commission.

GP PARK SETS UP IN EX-SHOWROOM: Despite appearances, Grosse Pointe Park doesn't have the world's first drive-thru combined courtroom and city council chamber. Even if somewhere such a place exists, Park judicial and legislative hearings taking place in a former automobile showroom have no intentional Motor City theme. City officials have set up shop temporarily in the empty dealership, located next to city hall on Jefferson between Maryland and Lakepointe, while permanent chambers at city hall are being renovated.

2010

15 years ago this week

NORTH, SOUTH STUDENTS TO EXPLORE GLOBAL ISSUES: Grosse Pointe North and Grosse Pointe South high schools are preparing for next year with three pilot classes. On the slate for 2016-17 are exploring global issues through service learning, forensic science and an innovative studies series. Exploring global issues, a semester-long elective that encourages a greater understanding of the connection between global issues and local concerns, will be taught by Dan Gilleran at North and Crosby Washburne at South. Students will examine the issues through a practical and theoretical framework in a traditional classroom setting. This will be supplemented by a required civic engagement component.

LETTERS:

Continued from page 6A

gratitude are gifts we need to keep giving all year long.

Our sincere appreciation to everyone who put their heart and soul into “White Christmas” and to the community for their understanding and continued support. We look forward to seeing you at a future Grosse Pointe Theatre production.

Wishing you and yours a beautiful holiday season and a healthy and joyous New Year.

GROSSE POINTE THEATRE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our View editorial titled “Enough is enough” and two letters noting the dysfunctional leadership of Board President Worden and Trustees Hull, Derringer and St. John.

It seemed fantasy that a unanimous school board vote of 7-0 on any topic was possible. Maybe the holiday spirit brought some temporary relief from “Tuttle D e r a n g e m e n t Syndrome”?

BRUCE FERGUSON
Grosse Pointe Farms

Proposal clarified

To the Editor:

We are writing in response to “Park for recreation, not a meadow,” published in the Nov. 13 issue. The reasons for rejecting a meadow are concerns that have been considered, as well as addressed in the proposal. Seen as an extension of the existing boardwalk, the project not only aims to provide habitat, but

enhance recreation by offering new programming and community engagement opportunities.

Numerous statements have been made that are not backed by actual events, discussions and publicly available information. The two park residents mentioned in the letter are commissioners who help coordinate volunteer gardening efforts at Patterson Park. It is the responsibility of the beautification commission to provide recommendations for the beautification and environmental concerns of GPP, as well as promote projects that would address them.

A “Trail and Meadow Amenity” was first proposed to the beautification commission at the June meeting and approved for further review by the city. Commissioners then met with the city manager, director of parks and recreation and cross-country coaches to discuss the proposal and confirm

that existing programs and events at the park would not be impacted. At the direction of the city, an informational proposal was then presented to the recreation committee. The beautification commission has been kept informed as to the status of the proposal and presentations.

Community feedback is important; this is not just a meadow, but an amenity to enhance recreation at Patterson Park. Anyone with questions or concerns are encouraged to email beautification@grossepointepark.org or attend a meeting. We

would be glad to provide the facts in more detail.

This letter is our own personal communication/opinion.

KELLY KONIECZKI
AND JIM CREIGHTON
Grosse Pointe Park

Just stop

To the Editor:

This letter refers to the editorial titled, “Enough is enough,” (Dec. 4, 2025, Grosse Pointe News). When I saw the headline, “Enough is enough,” I thought, “Finally!”

I agree with the headline, but what followed shocked me. It was a list of who did what to whom.

OK, both sides get it already. There's a personality conflict. Big deal. That's nothing new. Who of nearly any age hasn't experienced that?

The school budget is balanced, the bond issue passed with flying colors and the superintendent received an “excellent” rating. What else does either side want?

Just like individuals, there's a side you agree with and a side you don't agree with and a side where you sit on the fence. All of you know this, so just stop it! You're exhausting me.

NANCY SOLAK
Grosse Pointe Farms

Temporary relief?

To the Editor:

I read with a chuckle the last line in Ted O'Neil's article “GPPSS receives clean audit,” stating “the board voted 7-0 to accept the audit.”

This came in the same issue of the Grosse Pointe News that included the

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15139 KERCHEVAL, GROSSE POINTE PARK

Daycare parking lots get go-ahead in Park

By Brad Lindberg
Staff Writer

GROSSE POINTE PARK — City council members extended a developer's request to transform six vacant residential properties into two parking lots on Wayburn near a two-story, mixed-use residential-commercial structure being constructed on nearby Kercheval in Detroit.

The extension lasts one year.

It is the same as one issued almost exactly two years ago — and contingent at the time on the project making meaningful progress — because the developer is

fulfilling his obligation toward completion of the combined apartment and daycare structure.

All the Wayburn lots are vacant, split evenly below and above the intersection of Kercheval and numbered 1159, 1161, 1167, 1111, 1215 and 1217. Technically, paperwork for properties in the 1200 block of Wayburn already has been taken care of, but the Park city attorney recommended they remain part of the bunch.

"The applicant has continued to work toward securing the necessary zoning approvals, has maintained continu-

ity of the project and is actively constructing the improvements contemplated," City Manager Nick Sizeland wrote in a memo to council recommending the extension.

Site plan renderings of the proposed parking lots show 6-foot-tall screening walls, additional landscape screening, a brick-paved alley and permeable pavers to reduce puddling. Other aspects consist of an EV charging station, parking pay station and enclosed centralized dumpsters.

"It's going to be a very nice parking lot, like the other ones," said Mike Stines, an attorney representing the developer,

last month, referencing other lots in the district, such as behind Brine Oyster House and businesses on the south side of Kercheval between Maryland and Lakepointe.

Park officials also endorsed the extension despite Detroit officials lagging in granting full zoning approval.

"It's taken us a lot longer than we thought to get through the city," said project architect William Thomas, principal of William J. Thomas Studios in Rochester. "But, we're under construction now."

"I'm sorry you have to be here," Councilman Tim Kolar said.

Thomas plans to use the one-year extension to complete construction by fall — "hopefully."

"It opens a lot more capital for other improvements," he said.

Members of the Detroit Buildings, Safety, Engineering and Environmental Department conditionally approved the development in May 2024.

Reasons included:

- ◆ "The development will encourage further economic development in the surrounding community and create additional demand for goods and services by increasing population density in the area."
- ◆ "A mix-use develop-

ment will help eliminate blight and upgrade the surrounding neighborhood."

Conditions included, but were not limited to, constructing parking lots to accommodate users of the apartments and day care services.

"At least one of the two parking lots remained dependent on issuance of a final Detroit building permit within the applicable extension period," Sizeland wrote, "and therefore the timing conditions of the conditional rezoning have not been conclusively satisfied as to the full scope of the approved parking facilities."

Farms hand-picks contractors for Pier Park pool complex

By Laurel Kraus
Staff Writer

GROSSE POINTE FARMS — Rather than going out to competitive bid for the design and construction of Pier Park's forthcoming new pools and bathhouse, city leadership and project advisors have opted to select companies they believe are the obvious choice and move forward with a design-build approach, whereby a single entity is responsible for both design and construction under one contract.

"We've had many discussions about the options with which to do public work," said Sam Esser, senior project manager with Barton Malow, which the city hired as its construction manager. "The design-build approach is the most expeditious approach to do construction with the desire to do your pool renovations next summer. Given the

time constraints the project will be under, design-build will be the optimal solution for getting the design and build by both the designer and contractor."

City administration outlined the advantages of a design-build approach to be:

- ◆ faster delivery — design and construction may proceed concurrently, aka fast-tracking;

- ◆ cost control — early collaboration allows for more accurate budgeting and fewer change orders;

- ◆ simplified communication — the designer and builder work together, reducing potential disputes;

- ◆ and single accountability — the design-builder is responsible for performance, cost and schedule.

City council in November unanimously awarded the design-build contract for pool facilities to Baruzzini

Aquatics, which Esser said is one of only two or three area pool companies qualified to do work of this magnitude.

"They're going to be booking their summer work right now, bidding other projects for schools or other municipalities," he added. "If you didn't move forward with a contract with them, they're not going to idly sit by. By the time you have a design for them to bid on in the spring, they may already be booked for this upcoming year, so you would end up not being able to even see one of the three be able to install your pool until the following year."

Baruzzini also is already familiar with the project, as it completed much of the preliminary design work.

"They have been involved from the onset, so they really have a good knowledge of our facilities and they can hit the ground running,"

City Manager Shane Reeside said.

City council within the same unanimous vote also awarded a design-build contract for the new bathhouse to local contractor, The Blake Company, which also was involved with the initial design and schematics for the new bathhouse.

"They have the most knowledge of the facilities at Pier Park (and) they, I think, have been involved with the construction of everything within the park, including the community building and the activity building and so forth," Reeside said. "They've got an excellent reputation in the area. Our building department has worked with them extensively and have noted their work, which is done well, on time and on budget."

City administrators clarified the contract with The Blake Company will include

provisions requiring the final construction value be established through an itemized breakdown of quantities and costs upon completion of the design, as well as validated against industry standards.

They expect the final proposal may even come in below typical market costs, given owner Chris Blake's community partnerships and access to local trades.

"That park is near and dear to my heart," Blake said. "I think the community building is probably the most important building I've built and I feel so proud about that and I would love the opportunity to finish off the park with a building that's compatible and meets the needs of our community and to make sure I do that at the most reasonable, economically efficient, good-looking way."

Once the design work for both contracts is complete, they each will

return before city council for detailed review and final approval of construction costs.

"We do have an anticipated budget for the various parts based upon cost estimates," Reeside said. "We've gone through our planners in Barton Malow, so they can take industry standards, look at those plans and identify costs."

He also noted the large-scale revamp of the aquatic facilities will be more extensive than only the pools and bathhouse, clarifying that other work will be competitively bid as normal.

"Those are two specific elements, but there's a lot of site work that's going to be done on the property — hard-scape walkways, pool decks, a softscape with landscaping and so forth — and we will be bidding that out competitively," Reeside said. "It will be handled separately."

AUDIT:

Continued from page 1A

we can be proud of and would honor our taxpayers," Hodges told auditor Daniel Beard, senior manager of Yeo & Yeo and head of its government services group. "I think we are exceeding that."

No material weaknesses nor noncompliance were identified.

"There was no non-compliance identified whatsoever and no significant deficiencies identified," Beard said.

He told the council, "We're giving you an unmodified opinion. That's what you're looking for when getting an audit. It means users of the financial statements can rely on the information."

There are two ways to report an audit. One is to toss out financial figures linked by detailed verbiage comparable to an exposition of the binomial theorem worthy of a technical journal.

The other is to toss out fewer numbers accompanied by verb- and adjective-heavy quotes easily understood by the reporter and non-nerd readers.

"We're on a path we need to be," said Kolar, in his first term on council. "This started many years ago and I've only been here two years. It's a testament to all the work and effort everybody here and the staff have put in to get us to this point. This is what we're going to continue to see. We are going to be in a great state here, as we continue to allow us to be

even more responsive to residents' needs."

Audit highlights were: ◆ A roughly \$525,000 increase in general fund revenue, totaling \$14,291,041, from 2024.

"That is what you want to see," Beard said. "You want to see revenues go up."

- ◆ Assessed taxable value of \$798 million, up \$48 million from the prior year.

- ◆ General fund expenses declined about \$460,000. Beard called that "excellent."

The largest expenditure, as always, was public safety. That totaled \$8,051,598 last year and represented 59 percent of costs.

"That's consistent with what we're seeing everywhere else," Beard said.

Around \$1.2 million of the public safety budget

paid for retirement benefits.

General government costs totaling \$2,270,105 eked out recreation and culture spending at \$2,134,567, or 17 to 16 percent of the total, respectively.

Public works was a comparative wallflower at \$593,640, or 7 percent.

- ◆ A growth in emergency reserves, known formally as unassigned fund balance and by slang as the rainy-day fund.

In 2023, reserves were just over \$2 million. In 2024, they went up to \$2.3 million. Most recently, the rainy-day fund registered just under \$2.9 million.

"This is what you want to see grow," Beard told the council. "You want those to be between 15 to 25 percent of total expen-

ditures. You guys are at 22 percent, so you have a healthy fund balance. Excellent."

"Having a healthy fund balance are things you want to hear," Hodges said, addressing the audience. "No major increases in expenditures, too. The community needs to understand that, especially if they see increases in their tax bills. It's not because expenses are out of whack; they're on par with where they should be."

- ◆ Working capital — the excess of revenue over expenditures — in the water-sewer fund of \$2,235,255.

"Your very liquid in that fund of \$2.2 million," Beard said.

Water-sewer infrastructure improvements during the auditing period totaled \$3,383,185.

"We're trying to take a proactive way to preven-

tative maintenance," said Councilman Max Wiener, head of the infrastructure committee.

- ◆ The pension system is funded 56.16 percent, just shy of the state-recommended 60 percent.

"You're probably going to be above 60 percent next year," Beard said.

"Our pension liability is way better than it was," Wiener said.

He described the city's overall financial health as a big improvement.

"It's trending really well — continuous improvement," he said.

"This has been one of our top priorities and we achieved it," Hodges said, "When you can say you have a healthy fund balance when we were deficit spending a short four years ago, that's a huge accomplishment."

Audit junkies can read the report line-by-line on the city's website, grossepointepark.org.

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GPPSS gets grant to help new teachers

By Ted O'Neil
Associate Editor

THE GROSSE POINTES — The Grosse Pointe Public School System has received a grant to help mentor new teachers.

The district is one of 121 statewide getting a portion of \$12 million aimed at classroom management and instructional delivery techniques.

"We are getting \$103,400, which is more than we were expecting," said Sara Delgado, assistant superintendent of teaching and learning. "We're very happy with the amount."

Delgado said the district applied for the grant last spring and had to outline how the money would be used, which includes professional development learning sessions for new teachers.

"We can also use some of the money to pay a stipend to mentor teachers and for paying substitute teachers while our new

teachers are out of the classroom for training," she said.

Teachers in GPPSS who are new to the profession are paired with a mentor for three years. Veteran teachers new to the district are paired with a mentor for a year, with a second year being optional.

"We try to pair them with a mentor in the same building and in the same department, unless they're in a very specialized area," Delgado said. "It's not just about the classroom, but also about different processes and programs we use."

GPPSS has 29 new teachers this year, including seven who are in their first year of teaching.

"We had one day set aside for them before classes started when they toured the district," Delgado said. "Since then, we've had three professional development days with them, so some of the money will go toward what we've

already spent."

A portion of the money also will be used for training new principals.

Enrollment in state teacher preparation programs increased 87 percent from the 2016-17 academic year to 2023-24, with 9,512 students in 2016-17 and 17,780 in 2023-24, according to the Department of Education. That rebound came after enrollment in teacher preparation programs decreased 59 percent from 2011-12 to 2016-17, with 23,203 students in 2011-12 and 9,512 in 2016-17.

"Michigan has made great progress in addressing its teacher shortage," said Interim State Superintendent Sue C. Carnell. "As new educators enter the profession, we must make sure they have the support they need to help students learn. Mentoring and induction programs help to improve student achievement and teacher retention."



COURTESY PHOTO

National Merit scholars recognized

A dozen students from Grosse Pointe South and Grosse Pointe North high schools were recognized by the Grosse Pointe Public School System Board of Education at its meeting Monday, Nov. 24, for their performance on the PSAT. Those named National Merit semifinalists scored in the top 1 percent of more than 1.3 million juniors who took the test last year. Those receiving a commendation scored in the top 3 to 4 percent.

From left, South Principal Cindy Parravano, Elena Martin (South, commended), Eleanor Sahutske (South, semifinalist), Caroline Ward (South, semifinalist), Zach Neme (South, semifinalist), Leo Neds-Fox (South, commended), Julian Lancaster (South, semifinalist), Gavin Perry (North, commended), James Jewell (North, commended), North Principal Kevin Shubnell and A Schroeder (North, commended). Not pictured: Peter Moe (North, commended), Erin Simpson (South, commended) and Joseph Reid (South, commended).



COURTESY PHOTO

Thirteen-year-old William Stines with Grosse Pointe Farms public safety personnel Wednesday, Nov. 26.

Feeding it forward

GROSSE POINTE FARMS — Officers scheduled to work Thanksgiving Eve were treated to a holiday feast with all the trimmings thanks to a creative idea for a National Junior Honor Society service project by an eighth grader at Brownell.

Thirteen-year-old William Stines solicited \$917 in donations from his family and friends before heading to Jumps Restaurant, where he picked up enough stuffing, turkey, gravy, mashed potatoes and pie to feed both shifts of officers who reported for duty

Wednesday, Nov. 26. "Most people usually do lemonade stands and stuff (for their service projects), so I wanted to do something cooler and that took a little more work," Stines said. "... It felt good because I was giving back to them, because they do a lot for our community."

— Laurel Kraus

PRIDE OF THE POINTES

Brynn Spicher of Grosse Pointe Woods recently was elected to membership into the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation's oldest and most selective all-discipline collegiate honor society, at the University of Findlay.

Peter Hoffmann of the City of Grosse Pointe and Kristopher Matthews II and Joseph Strong of Grosse Pointe Park were named to the Dean's List at Kettering University for the summer 2025 semester.

Grosse Pointe Park student Cam Thompson was selected as a member of Albion College's swimming and diving team for 2025-26. This is the second season Thompson is diving and swimming the breaststroke for the Britons.

Building blocks

Grosse Pointe Sunrise Rotary President Mark Heppner, right, stands with Candace Cox, center, of She's A Genius, and Sandra Cobb, left, past president of Grosse Pointe Sunrise Rotary, during the club's Nov. 4 meeting at Ford House. Cox provided an update about her nonprofit, which helps young women explore their artistic talents and develop self-worth. She's A Genius's programs help build self-confidence and emotional strength through creative mentorship. The free programs offer young individuals the opportunity to learn to appreciate who they are and express themselves in their own unique ways. The Grosse Pointe Sunrise Rotary welcomes residents to join their Tuesday morning breakfast and presentations at Ford House. For more information, contact dennis.rotary1591@gmail.com.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BOB GRAMBO

WAYNE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT AS AGENT SERVICES

Sealed responses to a Request for Proposal will be accepted relating to the **Construction Manager Services As Agent (CMA) for the Mary Ellen Stempfle University Center Expansion Project - Phase I.**

Sealed Responses will be received until 2 p.m. EDT on **Wednesday, January 7, 2026**, by delivery or mail to:

Wayne County Community College District
ATTN: Akmam Jaigirdar, District Procurement Officer
801 W. Fort Street, Purchasing Department - 4th Floor
Detroit, Michigan 48226
Phone: (313) 496-2747

Late proposals will be returned unopened.

A Mandatory-Pre-Proposal walk-through meeting will be held on **Monday, December 15, 2025, 2 p.m.** at:

Wayne County Community College District
Mary Ellen Stempfle University Center & Center for Learning Technologies
19305 Vernier Road
Harper Woods, Michigan 48225

Request for Proposal documents will be available on or after **Tuesday, December 2, 2025**, via download from the Wayne County Community College District website: <https://www.wccd.edu/divisions/administration-and-finance/procurement/request-for-quotations-and-proposals>

Packages can be picked up from the Purchasing Department between **Tuesday, December 2, 2025**, and **Monday, December 15, 2025**, Monday-Friday from 9AM-2PM.

Proposal documents are available for review at the Wayne County Community College District Purchasing Department.

The respondent company must agree to comply with the requirements of Wayne County Community College District and Fair Employment Practices.

Wayne County Community College reserves the right to accept or reject any or all responses to this Request for Proposal and waive any informalities or irregularities in any qualifications if it is considered to be in the best interest of the College.

END OF ADVERTISEMENT

ASSAILANT:

Continued from page 3A

vide vapes, marijuana and alcohol to high school students through Snapchat," McDonald said in an April news release. "He is alleged to have told a 15-year-old female victim he would not sell her vape products unless they had sex. Incidents of sexual contact between the defendant and victim are alleged to have occurred in her home in Bloomfield Township and in the defendant's car."

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No bad hair days

By Brad Lindberg
Staff Writer

GROSSE POINTE PARK — It's been a few weeks since Tony Vassallo opened Park Barbers on Charlevoix and already the plan is coming together.

"I saw a need for a small community barber shop in Grosse Pointe Park — all the Grosse Pointes, to be honest," Vassallo said. "While a lot of other areas are oversaturated, I thought it was underserved here."

His vision manifested itself with the arrival of first-time customer Steven Pankotai and his son, 5.

"I live right down the street around the corner," Pankotai said. "It was an easy, convenient call to make my way over here."

Vassallo cut his chops in the Pointes for a couple years at Detroit Barber Co., on Kercheval at Wayburn, during which the sole proprietorship bug kept biting.

"I have a business degree and always wanted to run a small business," he said. "I have nothing but really good things to say about Detroit Barber. There's definitely enough room for both of us to be busy without having to struggle."

Actual barbers reportedly date back 5,000 years. Plato praised bar-

bers as indices of a sophisticated society.

Vassallo just has a knack for it.

"I always cut hair on the side in college for buddies," he said.

He's from L'Anse, a village of less than 2,000 an hour west of Marquette at the base of L'Anse Bay in the Upper Peninsula.

Upon graduating from Ferris State University, he got a job in the automotive supply industry at New Vintage USA.

"It's a custom gauge company in Ferndale," Vassallo said. "They make custom gauges for hot rods, dash kits, speedometers and stuff like that."

He faced a fork in the road when laid off due to supply chain issues during the pandemic.

"I was ready to make a career change," he said.

"For lack of a better way to say it, I was a square peg in a round hole. I decided to do an apprenticeship after COVID to get my license to cut hair and give it a try. I figured I could always go back to what I'd been doing before."

The proprietor bug is a family trait.

"My wife opened Zen Den Collective in Berkley a couple years ago," Vassallo said. "My wife is the massage therapist, but she owns the entire place."

Vassallo wants his shop to have an old-

school barbershop feel.

"You're not going to get a style and blow out your haircut, a hair wash and all that," Vassallo said. "It's come in, get a good trim and have a good conversation."

"The most prized businesses are locally owned and serve as places where we build more community," Mayor Michele Hodges said. "We know that happens at barbershops. I'm very glad he's taken time to invest here. We want to make sure we're in strong partnership with them to make certain they are successful."

"I live right down the street from there," Councilman Brent Dreaever said. "Barbershops have a long history of being meeting places, where court is held in town. Any place in town that gets people together is something I'm excited about. I look forward to walking down the street to get my hair cut and have conversations with my neighbors and the business owners."

"A barber that works with me does women's hair," Vassallo said. "She's worked in salons. I want to serve everyone in the community."

His sense of humor is printed on his business card: "If your hair's too long, there's sin in your heart."

"We don't advertise doing women's cuts, but



Tony Vassallo rests between tending clients at his already busy, week-old business, Park Barbers, 15210 Charlevoix, near Lakepointe, Grosse Pointe Park.

PHOTO BY
BRAD LINDBERG

we do long hair for sure," Vassallo said. "Everyone who walks in should be able to get their hair cut here. All ethnicities and genders. The door is open to everyone."

It's an eight-hour, 526-mile drive from Vassallo's hometown to his shop in the Park.

"The funny thing is, the thing that drew me to Grosse Pointe is the small-town vibe," he said. "It reminds me a lot of where I grew up in terms of the sense of community. The whole Grosse Pointe community and businesses have been so welcoming. The

biggest difference is we don't get the snow like we do up north."

That makes life tough to maintain his snow-

boarding skills.

"I have to travel to snow now instead of it coming to me," Vassallo said.

Shores resident's business recognized among country's best

By Ted O'Neil
Associate Editor

GROSSE POINTE SHORES — Affinity Home Care LLC, owned by Lisa Cleary, has been named by Newsweek as one of the top home care agencies in the nation.

Developed in partnership with global data and business intelligence firm Statista Inc., Newsweek's "America's Best Home Health Agencies 2026" ranking recognizes the 300 top providers based on four points: quality metrics, peer recommendations, patient experience and accreditations.

"Every patient and family we serve inspires us to do better, to reach higher and to care deeper," Cleary said. "This recognition is a reflection of their trust and our unwavering commitment to earning it, every single day."

Cleary said she wasn't aware of the ranking until the magazine contacted her.

"This isn't something you apply for," she explained. "They have access to Medicare data and can track improvement in the clients we work with."

This inaugural ranking recognizes the top providers in the 25 states with the highest number of home health agencies. Cleary received a

Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from Eastern Michigan University and became a registered nurse in 1985.

"I've been doing home care for about 20 years," she said. "It provides a lot of flexibility. I was able to take my kids to school and pick them up when they were younger."

Cleary had worked with AHC in the past and bought it in 2015.

"The opportunity came up and I couldn't pass it up," she said.

Her decision to go into nursing came about as she was growing up in Milford.

"My mom was very ill with diabetes and was in and out of the hospital a lot," Cleary said. "I developed that compassion by watching how good the nurses were with my mom."

AHC mainly specializes in wound care and chronic disease and condition management, along with companionship and personal care, plus physical and occupational therapy.

"About 90 percent of our cases require one to two visits per week," Cleary said. "We have about 100 clients at any given time."

AHC has offices in St. Clair Shores and Harbor Springs. See affinityhomecaremi.com for more information.

CITY OF HARPER WOODS WAYNE COUNTY, MICHIGAN SYNOPSIS: REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING DECEMBER 1, 2025

The regular City Council meeting was called to order by Mayor Valerie Kindle at 7:00 P.M.
ROLL CALL: All Councilpersons were present

MOTIONS PASSED

- 1) To receive, approve and file the minutes of the regular City Council meeting held November 3, 2025 and furthermore receive and file the minutes of the Planning Commission meeting held on November 19, 2025.
- 2) To add to the agenda the termination of a Planning Commission appointment.
- 3) To adopt the Resolution Authorizing the Execution of Wayne County Permits, which will authorize the City to make necessary repairs to county roads and sidewalks, authorize the City to take any necessary restorative corrections to county roads and sidewalks, and lastly to authorize the City to temporarily close county roads and/or place temporary banners within the right-of-way.
- 4) To approve the changes to the City Council meeting dates as listed for 2026 as follows: January 19 to January 21, 2026 for the observance of Martin Luther King, Jr Day; February 16 to February 18, 2026 for the observance of President's Day and September 7 to September 9, 2026 in observance of Labor Day, and further that the City will meet on June 8, July 13 and August 10, 2026, the second Mondays only of the summer months.
- 5) To terminate the Planning Commission appointment of Greg Vargo, effective immediately.
- 6) That the agenda of the regular City Council meeting having been acted upon and with no further business, the meeting is hereby adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

RESOLUTIONS PASSED

- 1) WHEREAS, Section 4.3 of the City Charter, as amended, requires the City Council to elect the Council member receiving the highest number of votes at the most recent City election to serve as Mayor Pro tem, and WHEREAS, Vivian Sawicki is the Council member receiving the highest number of votes. NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council does hereby elect Vivian Sawicki to the Office of Mayor Pro tem for the term expiring at the first Council meeting following the next regular City election.
- 2) (1) approve the Accounts Payable/Payroll Vendor listing for Check Numbers 133755 through 133944 in the amount of \$636,624.79 as submitted by the City Manager and Finance Director, and further, authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to sign the listing. (2) approve payment to WCA Assessing in the amount of \$6,703.33 for the contractual assessing services to be performed during the month of December 2025. (3) approve payment to Simplified Business Solutions in the amount of \$9,217.84. for the email hosting, security and backups of our computer system for the month of October and November and for IT support services for all departments and for the renewal of the Watchguard license for the Kelly Road office. (4) approve payment to SAFEbuilt, LLC in the amount of \$35,870.95 for the contractual building department services performed during the month of October 2025. (5) approve payment to Anderson, Eckstein & Westrick, Inc. in the amount of \$28,724.45 for professional services during the month of November 2025 for the following projects: Harper/Van Antwerp Redev; City Hall Generator #180-291; 2024 Misc. Concrete Rep. #180-338; 2024 Pavement Striping #180-342; 2024 Joint Crack/Seal #180-341; TAP Sidewalk Program #180-349; Roscommon Pocket Park #180-329; 2025 Sidewalk Replacement #180-367; 2024 Sidewalk Replacement #180-350; DWRP Lead Water Serv. Repl. #180-331; Temp Water Operator #180-303; Harper Eastwood DTE #180-381; 2025 San. Sewer FCIPP #180-364; 2024 Storm Sewer Rep. #180-337; 2025 Storm Sewer Rep. #180-362; 2025 Sanitary Sewer Lining #180-379; Miss Dig #180-255. (6) approve payment to Crest Ford, in the amount of \$10,608.73 for repairs to police vehicle #67. (7) approve payment to Blue-Water Solutions in the amount of \$5,723.76 for purchase of 24 new Badger automatic read water meters and accessories. (8) approve payment to Doxim, Inc. in the amount of \$5,181.45 for the processing and mailing of the October Water Bills and envelope supplies. (9) approve payments to Nu Appearance Maintenance, Inc. in the amount of \$6,292.00 for commercial lawn cutting, trash pickup and assistance with leaf pickup and fall maintenance in various areas of the City. (10) approve payment to Turf and Timber LLC in the amount of \$17,700.00 for the removal of dead and downed trees/limbs. (11) approve payment to Uni Dig in the amount of \$5,400.00 for leaf disposal in conjunction with the curbside leaf pick up program. (12) approve payment in the amount of \$17,400.00 to Guardian Sewers for their assistance with several water main breaks and site clean up. (13) approve payment in the amount of \$43,614.44 to Hannah Architects for the design development and construction documentation for the Harper Woods Community Center Project.
- 3) To approve the Additional Services Request submitted by Hannah Architects in the amount of \$325,047.00 for additional service in excess of A/E Basic Services, Geotechnical Services and 35% of Air Structure Dome purchase price, and further, to authorize the City Manager to sign the agreement on behalf of the City of Harper Woods.
- 4) To approve the reimbursement to Grosse Pointe Animal Society (GPAAS) in the amount of \$47,000.00 from the remaining balance in the City's K9 fund.
- 5) To approve payment to DVM Utilities, Inc. in the amount of \$64,825.20 for Progress Payment No. 2 on the 2025 Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation by FCIPP Lining Project #180-364.
- 6) to approve payment to Great Lakes Contracting Solutions, LLC in the amount of \$113,296.31 for Progress Payment No.2 on the 2025 Storm Sewer Repair Project, #180-362.
- 7) To approve payment to Premiere Group Associates LLC in the amount of \$37,355.25 for Progress Payment No. 3 on the Roscommon Pocket Park Project, #180-329.
- 8) To approve the Cost Reimbursement Agreement between the City of Harper Woods and the City of Detroit and, further to authorize the reimbursement to the City of Detroit for the sanitary sewage flow portion that originates in Harper Woods and flows through the Bluehill Pump Station in the amount of \$40,544.55 and further to authorize the City Manager to sign the agreement on behalf of the City.

Valerie Kindle, Mayor

Leslie M. Frank, City Clerk



COURTESY PHOTO

Lisa Cleary, seated, left, and her staff at Affinity Home Care LLC.

FEATURES



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They still get a kick out of it

By Ted O'Neil
Associate Editor

Four women with local ties — all former Radio City Rockettes — were in New York last month as the iconic dance troupe kicked off its 2025 season while celebrating its 100th anniversary.

“As soon as the music turned on, I started counting the steps, it was so easy to remember,” said Marlene Boll of Grosse Pointe Shores. “They wear the same costumes and do the same routines I did.”

Boll, 92, was a member from 1951 to 1954. While not the oldest living Rockette, she was the oldest of some 500 former Rockettes to attend the celebration.

“After everyone was seated, they announced my name and called me a living legend,” she laughed. “A little boy was there with his mom sitting in front of us and he said, ‘You were a Rockette?’ It was so cute.”

After the show, Boll was taken backstage and presented with flowers while she chatted with current Rockettes and crew members.

“We were talking about how the dances went and how they sometimes have the same costume problems we used to have,” she said. “They



Marlene Boll received flowers backstage as the Radio City Rockettes welcomed back some 500 former dancers to celebrate the troupe's 100th anniversary.

still do the living nativity at the end with live animals like we did.”

She also told the women about how her late husband, John, would attend shows and get her attention.

“He'd always sit in the same seat and waved a white hanky to let me know he was there,” Boll recalled. “The other girls would whisper, ‘He's

here again’ while we were dancing.”

Boll also attended the 50th anniversary, but said it wasn't as extravagant as last month.

“Like we say, once a Rockette, always a Rockette,” she grinned. “It's a sisterhood. It's a wonderful feeling that it's still going.”

Another part of that sisterhood is Cori

Callahan of Grosse Pointe Woods, co-owner of Mack Avenue Dance Studio. She was a member from 1997 to 2004.

“Sitting there that night brought back a flood of memories that you sort of forget about as life goes on,” she said. “We were all sitting in our seats kind of moving along to the choreography. It's ingrained in your body.”



Cori Callahan, second from left, and Jen Fiandt, third from left, pose with other former Rockettes who did Christmas shows at Fox Theatre in Detroit.

Aside from performing at Radio City Music Hall, Callahan said she also signed up for the Detroit shows at the Fox Theatre that were part of “Christmas Across America.”

“They had shows in Detroit, Chicago, Branson and Las Vegas,” the Oakland County native said. “I'd always do Detroit so my family could see me.”

Callahan said the anniversary gathering was like a high school reunion, but on a grander scale.

“I think everyone got a little teary when the show started,” she said. “It was cool to see where everyone's lives and careers took them.”

“A lot of us went into teaching dance,” she added. “It's nice to know you're part of something so grand. The sisterhood of it all.”

Although she lives in Ferndale, Jen Fiandt teaches classes at

Callahan's studio. She was a member from 2002 to 2012.

“I was nervous to go, but it was great seeing old friends,” she said. “There was crazy energy. Lots of hugs and screams. We went through so much together and made lifelong bonds.”

Fiandt called being a Rockette the hardest job she's ever done.

“I loved my time in New York, but eventually I was ready for the next chapter,” she said. “I miss the memories, but my body doesn't miss the work.”

Fiandt and Callahan agreed the audience that night was probably the best and worst the current Rockettes would ever have.

“We could see things a regular audience wouldn't pick up on,” Fiandt laughed. “There was a lot of cheering.”

Alexis Olson of Grosse

See KICK, page 3B

Kids on the Go on the hunt for new home

By Jody McVeigh
Editor

Hopes that Kids on the Go would be able to stay at the Pare Nonprofit Center after undergoing emergency roof repairs were dashed mid-November when founder Kristy Schena and representatives from South Lake Schools, which owns the building, met to discuss the future.

It was determined the building has too many necessary repairs — including a full roof replacement and new boilers, among other issues — to be a viable option for the nonprofit.

While Kids on the Go searches for a new home, Schena said she is grateful to the school district. “Since Kids on the Go moved in there in 2018, our growth has been tremendous,” she said. “It has not only allowed us to expand our programming to year-round, but also to expand the amount of programming we offer.”

Kids on the Go serves children ages 3 to 17 who have special needs, offer-

ing a variety of physical, occupational and speech therapies, recreational and sports programs, wellness and educational workshops, as well as initiatives focused on job readiness, life skills and independence. Its year-round therapeutic, recreational and family support programs are offered at no cost.

“We are the only nonprofit in our region offering this full continuum of services completely free of charge,” Schena said. “We offer 50 programs throughout the year, from developmental therapies and performing arts to recreational and adaptive sports.”

“... Our current lease will expire by the end of 2026, putting our ability to continue operating at stake,” she added. “Without a permanent home, we risk losing essential space for therapies and family support programs that change lives. The greatest obstacle we face is timing: To avoid disruption, we must secure funding, finalize site plans and begin development now.

... A forever home is our solution: a stable, secure, adaptive environment designed specifically to deliver therapeutic fun, innovation and lifelong support.”

Schena said her goal is to keep Kids on the Go headquartered locally in the Grosse Pointe and St. Clair Shores area.

“We want to continue to be accessible to our families and to reach all areas,” she said. “There's a continuum of care here with The ARC (of Grosse Pointe/Harper Woods) and Full Circle. Kids on the Go fills the need for younger kids. Without us, the younger generation loses those services. We want to keep going and provide that much-needed support. ... Our mission is to keep going, but we need help from the community to raise funds to secure our future home.”

Schena hopes to raise \$1 million for the cause.

“Our vision is to have 6,000 to 7,000 square feet that will include a recreational therapy gym, adaptive classrooms, therapy classrooms, a

Teen to Work Life Lessons Lab and store, an instructional kitchen, a children's play area and collaborative spaces for the community,” she said, noting she hopes Big Family of Michigan, also housed at Pare, will share the space as well. “Naming opportunities are available for key areas of the new facility.”

As for the peace garden and trees at Pare that were donated, planted and dedicated by the Grosse Pointe Sunrise Rotary Club, a separate move is in store. “South Lake Schools have promised to help relocate them to another park so they can be enjoyed for years to come,” Schena said.

Fundraising

Every other year, Kids on the Go hosts a massive gala to raise funds so it can continue to offer its programming free of charge.

In the interim, it hosts smaller fundraisers, like its recent Bourbon, Bubbles & Bingo event,

See HUNT, page 2B



COURTESY PHOTO

New York Giants Director of Player Engagement Darren Harris, with Kids on the Go founder Kristy Schena, selected to raise awareness for Kids on the Go for the NFL's “My Cleats My Cause” campaign.

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2B | FEATURES

AAUW art contest winners displayed

Awards presented Dec. 13

By Jody McVeigh
Editor

Organizers of the American Association of University Women Grosse Pointe Branch's annual student art contest aren't the only ones amazed at the quality of the entries created by teens ages 14 to 18.

"One painting from last year sold for quite a good amount of money," said AAUW member Kathy Conlon. "A doctor was passing through The War Memorial and saw the painting on the wall — a baby in a womb — and bought it for her practice. The same girl who painted that entered again this year."

Twenty-one entries line the hallway of the Grosse Pointe Artists Association's guest gallery for the AAUW's fifth annual student art exhibition, which follows the theme, "Listen to Women."

"Kids are invited to explore anything pertaining to women," Conlon said. "It's amazing what they come up with."

Students were asked to submit artwork — paintings, drawings, sculptures, mixed media, collage or other forms — that explores the life of a woman, whether celebrating achievements, predicting the future or portraying issues women currently face.

Entries will be judged on interpretation of the theme, demonstration of artistic ability, originality and quality of art, overall design and use of medium.

Elizabeth Gauthier, a muralist and an adjunct professor at College for Creative Studies, returns to jury the show.

"She will visit prior to the Dec. 13 awards presentation," Conlon noted. "Artists and their families and friends are invited to the awards ceremony at 2 p.m."

The AAUW as a whole and the Grosse Pointe branch work to advance equity for women and girls in society.

"AAUW has always been about helping women," Conlon said. "In the 1800s, it helped

About the AAUW

The Grosse Pointe Branch of AAUW began in 1944, and is a local branch of the national organization of The American Association of University Women.

Over the years, the AAUW Grosse Pointe Branch has provided fellowship, programs and opportunity to advance equity for women and girls in society.

Fundraising provides the means to fund national endowments and scholarships, as well as local scholarships to women at Wayne State University, Alternatives for Girls and Macomb Community College.

The branch partners and supports community events that align with its mission. It is a member of the Grosse Pointe Chamber of Commerce and a registered U.S. public charitable 501(c)3 organization.

Deciding to make a more profound impact in the community while supporting and encouraging science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics careers, the branch has provided funds to continue and expand robotics teams, annually awards scholarships to graduating high school seniors and hosts an art contest and exhibition.

Donations to AAUW Grosse Pointe Education Program are tax deductible and much appreciated. For more information, visit grossepointe-mi.aauw.net.

women get an education when they couldn't afford one. Later on, it contributed to Marie Curie's radium research. Now our focus is on gender equity."

The local branch achieves its mission by awarding scholarships, providing funding for local robotics programs and through the art contest.

"This isn't just about

art," Conlon added. "We're encouraging the boys and girls who participate to take a look at women's issues, so it's about education, too."

The War Memorial, 32 Lakeshore, Grosse Pointe Farms, is open 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday.

"Listen to Women" runs into January.

AREA ACTIVITIES

Shaw's Books

Shaw's Books, 14932 Kercheval, Grosse Pointe Park, hosts its 16th annual Holiday Book Sale 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fridays through Sundays, through Dec. 28. All books, ephemera, prints, maps, posters and other paper collectibles — more than 25,000 unique items — are 20 percent off during the sale. Call (313) 824-4932.

East Village

The East Village Holiday Market — a collaboration between Vesey Lane Goods, Redesign and Restoration, Grandeur Cru Wine Shop, Moonlight Arts Collective and Grand Trolley — takes place 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, through Dec. 20. Each five-hour tour starts with shopping at the David Sidney Building, 9916 Kercheval, Detroit, and continues to other businesses and art centers in East Village. Trolley tours take place 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays. A complimentary cup of hot chocolate, tea or coffee, a 5-ounce glass of wine and a thank-you card are included with each ticket, which may be purchased online at tinyurl.com/vej5mpm8.

Jardinieres

La Societe des Jardinieres meets at 5 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 11, for cocktails and dinner. The hostess Kathie Smith will talk about the history of the poinsettia. Members will bring a consumable gift for the annual gift exchange and will decide on their annual charitable donation.

POST Detroit

POST Detroit, 14500 Kercheval, Detroit, hosts several workshops during December. To sign up for the following, visit mutualadoration.com:

◆ Outer Realm Teas pop-up shop, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 11.

◆ Detroit Apron Co., pop-up shop, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday, Dec. 12.

◆ Drop-in Workshop: Felt + Fabric Ornaments, 2 to 6 p.m. Friday, Dec. 12. Cost is \$25.

◆ Nick Roncone Ceramics pop-up shop, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 13.

◆ Mend + Adorn Workshop: Sashiko, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 13. Cost is \$50.

◆ Drop-in Workshop: Modern Winter Wreaths, 2 to 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 13. Cost is \$15.

◆ Mocktail Making Workshop: Festive Sober Drinks, 3 to 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 13. Cost is \$55.

◆ Brie Moblo/Beemo Textiles pop-up shop, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 14.

◆ Ryan Moblo Ceramics pop-up shop, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 14.

◆ Custom Paw Print Tile or Ornament, by appointment, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 14. Cost is \$65.

◆ Drop-in Workshop: Ceramic Ornaments, noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 14. Cost is \$25.

◆ Mixed Media Abstract Collage Workshop, 4 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 17. Cost is \$60.

◆ Enameling

Workshop: Embellished Ornaments, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 17. Cost is \$50.

◆ Littlest Giant Jewelry pop-up shop, 4 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 18.

◆ Ashwelle Fiber Works pop-up shop, 4 to 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 19.

◆ Black Cat Pottery pop-up shop, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 20.

◆ Drop-in Workshop: Dog Bandanas, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 20. Cost is \$25.

◆ Alchemy Slow Living pop-up shop, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 21.

◆ Tree Trunk Arts pop-up shop, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 21.

◆ Sewing Machine Essentials Workshop: Scrunchies, 2 to 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 27. Cost is \$75.

◆ Sewing Workshop: Crossbody Bags, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 28. Cost is \$120.

The Helm

The Helm at the Boll Life Center, 158 Ridge, Grosse Pointe Farms, offers a variety of classes and programs. Registration is required at (313) 882-9600 for the following:

◆ The movie "Holiday in the Wild" is shown at noon Friday, Dec. 12. Cost is \$3 for members, \$5 for guests.

◆ Holiday Party, noon to 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 17. Cost is \$20 for members, \$25 for guests.

◆ The movie "Christmas with the Kranks" is shown at 4:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 18. Cost is \$3 for members, \$5 for guests.

◆ Out to Lunch Bunch, noon to 2 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 18. The group is going to Cracker Barrel, Roseville. Bus transportation is \$6 for members, \$8 for guests.

◆ Canasta, noon to 4 p.m. Mondays. Free for members, \$6 for guests.

◆ The Friendship Club, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. the second Tuesday of each month.

◆ Bridge Club, 12:30 to 4 p.m. Wednesdays and Thursdays. Free for members, \$6 for guests.

◆ Walking Club, 6 to 7 p.m. Tuesdays.

◆ Grief Work Support Group, 5 to 6 p.m. Tuesdays and 2 to 3 p.m. Thursdays, with psychotherapist Frank Wilberding.

◆ New Games at The Helm, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays. Cost is free for members, \$3 for guests.

The War Memorial

The War Memorial, 32 Lakeshore, Grosse Pointe Farms, offers programs and activities for the community.

For information on the following, visit war-memorial.org

◆ Holiday Dress Sewing Workshop, 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 13, for ages 7 to 14. Cost is \$85.

◆ Breakfast with Santa, 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 14. Tickets are \$45 per child, \$67.50 for adults.

◆ Merry & Bright Holiday Dinner, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 18. Cost is \$75 for dinner and the concert, \$20 for the concert only.

See EVENTS, page 5B

Longtime Kids on the Go volunteer Darien Harris repped Kids on the Go during the NFL's "My Cleats My Cause" campaign.



COURTESY PHOTO

HUNT:

Continued from page 1B

which took place Nov. 7, at Lochmoor Club.

"It included dinner, bourbon and champagne tastings, bar bingo and trivia and a silent auction," Schena said. "We sold out early. I'm so grateful for the community support."

Sponsors for B3 included Howard & Howard, Schena Roofing & Sheetmetal, Matt and Kathleen Davis, Aloia Law, Sommers Schwartz, Christian Financial Credit Union, First State Bank, Comerica Bank and EW Grobbel Sons.

Beverage sponsors were Detroit City Distillery, Woods Wholesale Wine and Chandon.

The event, which drew 150 attendees, raised nearly \$50,000 for Kids on the Go.

More recently, Kids on the Go was selected as the beneficiary of the student-run nonprofit, Key2Finesse, which hosted its annual Speak the Difference 11.0 competition Sunday, Dec. 7, at the Vistatech Center in Livonia.

This past summer, Key2Finesse high school board members helped create and carry out weekly lesson plans to

teach leadership and public speaking skills for Kids on the Go teens.

Lastly, while the 2026 gala still is in early planning stages, Schena already has secured at least one item that will be up for auction.

"We were just chosen for the NFL's My Cause My Cleats campaign," she said. "Darien Harris is a friend of Kids on the Go and he chose Kids on the Go for the campaign. He'll be bringing awareness to our cause and mission and the need to keep our program going."

Harris, a former Michigan State University linebacker and team captain, recently left his post as MSU's assistant athletic director to serve as director of player engagement for the New

York Giants.

Harris — who played in 54 games as a Spartan, tied for the most in program history in a four-year span, and also was part of the winningest senior class in program history with 43 wins — has volunteered for Kids on the Go since 2018. He is an honorary Kids on the Go board member and serves on its Hope Committee. He and Schena both are on MSU's ComArtSci Alumni Board.

"He has a big heart for our mission," Schena said.

Harris' My Cause My Cleats shoes — which he wore during the Giants' recent visit to Ford Field — will be auctioned at the gala Nov. 7, 2026.

To donate to Kids on the Go, visit kidsonthegocamp.com/give/

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Christmas on Lakeshore a cappella concert is Dec. 16

By Jody McVeigh
Editor

The Grunyons and Noteworthy will usher in the Christmas season with their 11th annual production of Christmas on Lakeshore, an evening of a cappella, beginning at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 16.

Both groups are spicing up their set lists this year.

"We've both had an influx of younger people, so there's new energy," said Pam Montgomery, a Noteworthy member since 2017. "We're doing a lot of new pieces."

Noteworthy, the 15-member, "no fella a cappella" group founded in 1978, is led by director Carrie Fisk.

"Our set will be a mix of holiday music and contemporary music," Montgomery said, "including songs that have been performed by Billy Joel, Christina Aguilera and Pentatonix."

Sharing the stage with Noteworthy is the Grunyons, a 20-member, all-male a cappella group that is undergoing a few changes of its own.

"We picked up some younger guys, which is great," said Tony Alcantara, M.D., who recently stepped down after 20 years as director.

"Besides Christmas songs, we have two brand new songs this year," he said. "New songs are always a challenge, but it's a good challenge. ... One is a tribute to Brian Wilson — a Beach Boys song that was arranged after he passed away. The other new song is from The Arbors."

The Arbors, he explained, was a pop vocal group that formed



Above, the Grunyons and, right, Noteworthy will perform their 11th annual joint concert, Christmas on Lakeshore, Dec. 16, at Grosse Pointe United Methodist Church.



COURTESY PHOTOS

in Ann Arbor in 1964. The quartet made a name for itself not only with charted singles, but also popular television jingles.

"The last of The Arbors gave the Grunyons The Arbors' music library, to be caretakers of it and to perform it," Alcantara said. "One song they did quite a bit, we've revived. This will be the second one we've taken from their library."

The Grunyons and Noteworthy will split their stage time during the approximately 90-minute performance.

"This is a busy time of year for the Grunyons," Alcantara said. "We have lots of gigs, but this Christmas concert is the

pinnacle of all the concerts we prepare for."

Christmas on Lakeshore takes place at Grosse Pointe United Methodist Church, 211 Moross, Grosse Pointe Farms.

"It has wonderful acoustics," Montgomery said of the venue. "They've been our great performance house for a number of years and they're great to work with."

Alcantara and Montgomery urged attendance to the popular performance.

"It's a great way to get in the holiday spirit," Montgomery said. "People say, 'We so look forward to it' and 'Now it really feels like it's the

holidays.'"

Added Alcantara, "I don't think people Christmas carol very much anymore. Live Christmas music is rare nowadays. You can hear it on the radio, but that's more pop. A cappella is different. It's uplifting for the holiday season."

Tickets are \$18 in advance via the QR code. A limited number of tickets will be available at the door for \$25, cash only.

Moving forward while stepping back

After just more than 20 years at the helm of the Grunyons, Alcantara decided it was time to step down as director — the opposite of what put him in the position to

begin with.

"I became director because I didn't step backwards fast enough," he laughed. "We were at a transition point where some of the guys said, 'Tony, we need you to be the leader.' I said OK, I'd give it a shot. I had experience arranging music, but I didn't have experience directing."

"When I first started (in 1995), I felt like I was just waving my arms and guys were singing," he continued. "I had backup and mentorship from (Grunyons founder) Bill Gard, who was the director before me."

He cited his career — he is chairman of radiology at Henry Ford St. John Hospital — as his main reason for stepping down.

"Things got too busy at work," he said. "I felt like I needed to take something off my plate. And I felt this was a good time to step back."

"I'm still involved with the group, still singing," he added. "I told the group I wanted to do more archiving the history of the group. There's a lot to keep track of — music recordings, video recordings, newspaper articles, pictures. All of that needs to be preserved. I'm going to maintain the music archive and digitize all the handwritten notes. ... It has to be digitized so people can have it in the future to enjoy."

Like many members of the Grunyons, Alcantara's love of singing is lifelong.

"I sang a lot in college at the University of Michigan, in the men's glee club and The Friars, an octet," he said. "Three of The Arbors were

Friars in the late '50s. Some members of the Grunyons were in the glee club and The Friars. The Grunyons, when I found them, were similar to The Friars in the way they performed — the comical things they add to performances, the levity."

Montgomery, also a U-M graduate, performed with the university's now-defunct vocal jazz group, The Amazing Blues.

"There wasn't a women's glee club then, though there is now," she added. "I had also done choir and musical theater all through high school and I sang in middle school. I just love to sing."

She joined Noteworthy after realizing how much her husband, Bob Montgomery, enjoyed performing with the Grunyons, which celebrated its 75th anniversary last spring.

"As part of our 75th anniversary, the Grunyons released a new album," Alcantara said. "It's called 'From the Edge.' The title comes from a phrase our founder, Bill Gard, used to say during rehearsal when he wanted to start a song from the very beginning."

"It's available on many streaming services, including iTunes and Spotify."



The Helm to distribute food boxes

Pointe seniors 60 and older can receive fresh produce from Eastern Market

Grosse Pointe residents 60 and older who are experiencing food insecurity may register to receive a fresh produce box from The Helm.

The drive-up, pick-up event takes place 3 to 5 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 18, at The Helm, 158 Ridge Road, Grosse Pointe Farms.

Residents of any of the five Grosse Pointes who are 60 or older and would like to register for a food box should call The Helm at (313) 882-9600. They will need to provide their name, address, phone number and date of birth. Identification will be required at pick up. There is a limit of 100 boxes.

Due to the limited number of produce boxes, registration is required.

"We held a similar event in Harper Woods

last month," said Krista Siddall, executive director of The Helm. "The Grosse Pointe communities expressed a need as well. We're happy to help and grateful we can do so."

The boxes, purchased

from Eastern Market Farmer's Market, are paid for by an emergency food insecurity fund created by donors to The Helm.

"Every community

See FOOD, page 4B



COURTESY PHOTO

Alexis Olson and her husband, Matthew, at the performance.

KICK:

Continued from page 1B

Pointe Farms, a Rockette from 2003 to 2018, likened the performance to a showing of "Rocky Horror Picture Show," when audience members

interact with the film. "We know it so intimately, with all the inside jokes," she said, "that we were shouting things out as they were dancing."

Olson said she enjoyed reminiscing with her fellow Rockettes.

"It was magical."

She added the Rockettes have a "unique vocabulary" of precision and discipline.

"It's not just physical, but mental discipline as well," she noted. "If we made it look easy, that meant we were doing our job."



You're invited to Grosse Pointe Memorial Church this holiday season as we await the arrival of Jesus our Savior!

Christmas in Blue: A Music at Memorial Concert

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14 AT 3 PM

Free admission with reception to follow.

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TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16 AT 7 PM

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Christmas Eve Service Schedule

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24

12 pm, Daytime Service Opportunity

5 pm, Family Service with childcare available

7:30* & 10 pm, Candlelit Service with Full Choir

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Visit our YouTube channel at gpmchurch.org

4B | OBITUARIES

OBITUARIES

Obituary notices are purchased and often prewritten by family or friends. While we try to run obituaries as submitted, we nevertheless reserve the right to edit for accuracy, style and length.

Helen Irene Cargas

Helen Irene (nee Limber) Cargas, 93, passed away Thursday, Nov. 20, 2025, a few days after celebrating her 93rd birthday on Nov. 11.

Helen was born in Lansing, to William and Chrisoula (nee Kokkines) Limber, both now deceased. She spent her childhood in Lansing, visiting her family in Grand Rapids and Chicago, working for her father at the Capital Laundry, singing in the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church choir and enjoying movies. She was the loving older sister of the late Connie Kavalaris (Gus) and the late Nick Limber.

Helen was educated at Michigan State University in nearby East Lansing. In 1961, she married a real Spartan, Perry "Pericles" James Cargas, who predeceased her in 2001. She also assisted him at their family-style restaurants, Town Crier, that welcomed and fed many in Warren, Southfield, Utica, Sterling Heights and Royal Oak.

When their son James was born in 1966, she became a full-time homemaker. She always made it clear she was not a housewife; she was married to Perry, not the

house. Her home was lit up in 1975, when Vicky was born. Along the way, Nugget and Feta became part of the family, too.

Helen was very much her own person and a strong woman with a resilient character. She loved books, history and the arts, including music, paintings, dance, theater and architecture. Helen dedicated her life and time to her children, shuttling them to school, sports, ballet, ice skating, horseback riding and more. She sewed ice dresses and Halloween costumes.

Family dinners frequently were at the Town Crier where the family could eat together. Helen's sour cream apple pie and a few other dishes were universally loved but often reserved for holidays. Helen made a home, but Perry was the master in the kitchen.

Much like Eva Gabor in "Green Acres," she turned a hunting cabin in Gaylord into a warm and welcoming retreat for the family to enjoy and thrive. Helen was an avid photographer of family vacations and milestones and always sent Christmas cards when time permitted or when the post office was less busy in January.

She was a lifelong member of the Daughters

of Penelope. Helen also volunteered at Assumption Greek Orthodox Church when it was on Charlevoix Avenue and, later, Marter Road. For many years, she hand-addressed the GPA Action Auction invitations until she was replaced by a computer printer and fancy font.

Helen is survived by her children, James Cargas (Dorina) and Vicky Steensma (Brian); as well as her granddaughters, Sophia Steensma and Zoe Helmi-Cargas. She also is survived by her godchildren, Nicholas Mighion and Denise Bittinger; nephew, James Kavalaris; and dear cousin, Connie Constant. The family also wishes to acknowledge and thank Ashley Kohling for the loving care, companionship and laughs she brought to Helen's life.

Visitation occurred at A.H. Peters Funeral Home in Grosse Pointe Woods. A funeral was held at Assumption Greek Orthodox Church in St. Clair Shores. She was interred at Woodlawn Cemetery in Detroit with her Pericles.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorial donations be made in Helen and Perry's memory to AHEPA District 10



Helen Irene Cargas

Educational Foundation, c/o Milton Gust, 1628 Crimson, Troy, MI 48083. Include their names on the memo line.

Share a memory at ahpeters.com.

Alethia Christopher

Alethia Christopher, 97, passed away peacefully Friday, Nov. 28, 2025.

Alethia was born Feb. 9, 1928, in Detroit, to Jordan and Aspasia Dasgalos.

Alethia is survived by her nieces and nephews, Lili Calder, Alex Calder, Christine Ballman, Mary Kaliardos, William Kaliardos and James Kaliardos. She also is survived by four grandnephews.

Alethia was predeceased by her husband, John Christopher; and her younger sisters, Catherine Kaliardos and Mary Calder.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Assumption Greek Orthodox Church, 21800 Marter, St. Clair Shores, MI 48080, go.assumption.org/stewardship; the American Lung



Alethia Christopher

Association, lung.org; or a charity of the giver's choice.

Arrangements entrusted to Chas. Verheyden Inc.

Joan Kathlyn Gallagher

Joan Kathlyn (nee Heidt) Gallagher, 89, passed away peacefully at home Wednesday, Nov. 26, 2025.

Joan was the beloved daughter of George and Margaret (nee Mallick) Heidt and sister of George Heidt and Margery Motchall, all now deceased.

Joan attended St. Paul on the Lake Catholic School, where she met most of her friends. She cherished those friendships until her passing, as they continued to meet for breakfast on a regular basis.

Joan studied at Michigan State University and became a teacher at Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic School. She also volunteered with the Christ Child Society of Detroit and the Bon Secours Assistance League for several years.

Joan loved to read novels and work on puzzles.



Joan Kathlyn Gallagher

She was an avid golfer and tennis player for many years. She rarely missed watching the Detroit Tigers and Michigan State University football and basketball games.

As a grandmother, Joan always was available to watch the kids as they grew up and was their biggest fan. She enjoyed taking her grandchildren shopping and out for lunch. She rarely missed a sporting event, school play or recital, whether held locally or in Akron, Ohio.

Joan is survived by her sons, Dan (Mary Kay) and Rick (Joelle). She was a proud grandmother to Ryan, Daniel, Annie Mitchell (Ryan), Cailin, Joey, Elizabeth, Lindsay, Meghan, Kelly, Jesse and Casey. Joan was predeceased by her parents; siblings, George Heidt and Margery Motchall; as well as her son, Tim, in 2015, and her husband, Richard, who predeceased her Jan. 3, 2025.

Joan will lie in state at 9:30 a.m. Monday, Dec. 22, at St. Paul on the Lake Catholic Church, 157 Lakeshore, Grosse Pointe Farms, until the time of her funeral Mass at 10 a.m.

RAYMOND P. ROBBINS

Raymond P. Robbins, 89, died October 31, 2025 surrounded by family at Kendal in Hanover, NH. Ray was born October 16, 1936 in Framingham, Massachusetts, the 5th and youngest child of Grace and Walter Robbins, and was raised in Hopkinton, MA. He attended Hopkinton High School where he was student government president, valedictorian, and a three-sport captain. Ray attended Dartmouth College with a NROTC scholarship and graduated in 1958 Phi Beta Kappa with Bachelor of Science in Chemistry. This was a huge accomplishment as he was the first of his family to get a college education. He served his U.S. Navy commission on the mine sweeper USS Sagacity as an engineering officer for two years and then went to Harvard University for a Masters in Education, graduating Phi Delta Kappa in 1961.

Ray married the loving companion in his life's odyssey, Lenita Dee Scott, in 1959 after they met at the Officer's Ball in Charleston, SC—he, 22, dressed dashing in his dress whites and she, 20, having recently relocated there.

In 1961 Ray and Lenita very boldly moved to Lugano, Switzerland so that Ray could become a chemistry teacher at The American School in Switzerland (TASIS). After just a little over a year and at a very young age of 27, Ray was tapped to become the school's headmaster and led the TASIS school until 1968. Their two children, Kristin and Heather, were born in Lugano in 1962 and 1964. Ray then returned with his family to Hanover, NH, to work in the Development Office at Dartmouth College for a transitional year while he contemplated his next move in education. In 1969, Ray became the headmaster of University Liggett School (ULS) in Grosse Pointe, Michigan which he led for 15 years. Afterwards, Ray and Lenita returned to Europe and were inspired to create Swiss Semester in 1986, a program for high school sophomores that continues to this day as an opportunity to study abroad in Zermatt, Switzerland; teens engage in rich academics, outdoor experiences, travel, international education,



character development, and leadership—all about which he was passionate. In 2002, Ray and Lenita returned to Hanover to be close to the Dartmouth community and family.

Aside from his love of chocolate milkshakes, chocolate, and French fries, Ray found joy in creating programs to broaden students' awareness of the world, cultivate empathy and connections with those around them, and to inspire their growing leadership. Aside from Swiss Semester, Ray and Lenita also founded Project Russia in 1967, a summer program to foster greater understanding between the two countries. In addition, Ray and Lenita led trips to Switzerland and Spain while Ray was a headmaster at ULS.

In Ray's words, "I have only to recall my Swiss Semester experience to remind me that everything is possible and that not to have faith in (young) people is condescending, counterproductive, and from my experience, unjustified!"

Some of the things that brought Ray the most joy was time in the outdoors—whether on the ski slope racing down that perfect groomer always trying to improve his form; weaving his way through the Hanover traffic on his moped with a tennis racket and golf club in his backpack; attending Dartmouth sporting events, lectures, or concerts (Oh, how he loved the football, soccer, and hockey games!!); on his bike with Lenita traveling through the countryside of Switzerland and France; or being out in the mountains hiking and climbing with the students at Swiss Semester.

He also adored readings about foreign affairs and education and was always eager to share and discuss (or quiz) anyone lucky enough to sit around the table with him!

A common refrain from anyone who encountered Ray was that he was always on the move with determination and a handsome gleaming smile, dressed in crisp pink polo shirt, often looking like the excited little boy that he still could resemble even days before he passed away. He was very fond of greeting people with "Ciao"!

He is preceded in death by his parents, Grace and Walter Robbins; his sisters, Virginia (Haskins), Eleanor (Welch), and Marjorie (Hall); his brother, Walter "Brud" (Robbins); and his great granddaughter Zoe Rose (Robbins-Snyder). Ray is survived by his wife of 66 years, Lenita; his son Kristin "Kris" (Robbins) of Hanover, NH (wife Kathryn Robbins) and granddaughters Heidi (Robbins) and Liesel (Robbins) and one great grandchild Olafur (Robbins-Snyder); his daughter Heather (Robbins Carley) of West Lebanon, NH and grandson Alexander (Carley) and two granddaughters Sarah (Carley) and Coreen (Carley); and seven nieces and nephews.

Celebration of Life to be held at a later date. Details to come on this Rand Wilson website (<https://www.rand-wilson.com/obituary/raymond-robbins>)

Further memories of Ray and Lenita's lives together may be forthcoming on this website as well.

Any donations may be directed to the "Ray and Lenita Robbins Scholarship" at University Liggett School, Grosse Pointe, MI (<https://www.uls.org/scholarships>). "The Ray and Lenita Robbins Scholarship recognizes new students entering grades six through twelve who excel academically and contribute meaningfully to school life. Recipients are selected for their strong character, citizenship, and active involvement in the University Liggett School community."



PHOTO COURTESY OF BOB GRAMBO

Inside AI

Grosse Pointe Sunrise Rotary Club President Mark Heppner, left, stands with Jim Harvey, principal at Jumar Consulting, at the club's Aug. 26 meeting at Ford House. Harvey shared an overview of artificial intelligence and how to harness it going forward. He explained that AI uses algorithms that learn from data and work with probabilities, so they can handle uncertainty and complexity rather than just following fixed rules. Some everyday uses are tutoring, software coding, creating written content and chatting with humans, among many other options. AI financial investment is continuing to grow on a large scale and Harvey encouraged those interested to experiment with its many uses.

FOOD:

Continued from page 3B

includes people across the economic spectrum and the Grosse Pointes are no exception," Siddall said. "Even in a place often seen as more affluent, we know there are neighbors quietly in need. One of The Helm's major supporters recognized

this reality and stepped forward with a substantial gift to launch the fund, then encouraged others to join in. We are truly fortunate to have such compassionate and generous donors."

Donations are being accepted for The Helm Food Insecurity Program. Those interested in contributing should call The Helm at (313) 882-9600.

Cookies with Santa

Cookies with Santa is back for another festive year at the Ford House. This experience with Santa gives every child a visit with Old St. Nick to share with him what they would like for Christmas. They also got a craft to take home and a cookie from Santa.

Right, Maximus Glinka watches as Santa reads his wish list. Santa was impressed that the list included a present for Glinka's Nana.



Eight-month-old John William Fleming was fascinated with Santa and mesmerized while Santa spoke to him.



Above, Addison Dulman, Adam Missant, Dylan Dulman and Clara Missant gather around Santa while he reads their lists. The last four years, the four of them have made it a tradition to visit Santa together. Right, Vivian Vandro gives her best smile while seated next to Santa for a picture.

PHOTOS BY RENEE LANDUYT



Nichole Hill, with her daughter Claire on her lap, sits next to her husband, Alex, and children, Sylvie and Lewis, for a photo with Santa.



Twenty-month-old Isla Izer was over the visit with Santa around the same time it began. Santa tried to distract her with sleigh bells, but she wasn't interested and tried to slide off her dad, Adam's lap.



All about TWAL

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BOB GRAMBO

Grosse Pointe Sunrise Rotary President Mark Heppner, center, stands with Maggie Ehrlich, left, and Meta Martinez, founders of TWAL of Grosse Pointe, during the club's Oct. 28 meeting at Ford House. Ehrlich and Martinez shared the origins of TWAL, a destination design-based company, which started almost two years ago with Grosse Pointe motif Christmas ornaments. It has since grown to include hats, cards, water bottles, tray tables and a new line celebrating Charlevoix landmarks. Sunrise Rotary welcomes residents to join its Tuesday morning breakfast and presentations at Ford House. Email dennis.rotary1591@gmail.com.

CHURCH EVENT

St. Michael's

St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 20475 Sunningdale, Grosse Pointe Woods, presents its final "Lunch, Laugh and Learn" of 2025, on Thursday, Dec. 18. For the third season, the church welcomes the Judelairens, who will perform holiday favorites. The program begins at noon followed by a chili, cornbread and coleslaw lunch. Reservations for lunch are required and space will be limited. To secure a seat, call the church office at (313) 884-4820 by Tuesday, Dec. 16.

Grosse Pointe United Methodist Church Cookie Mart is Dec. 13

The annual Grosse Pointe United Methodist Church Cookie Mart takes place 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, Dec. 13. This holiday tradition features thousands of homemade cookies and other treats. Cookies are \$10 per pound. Proceeds support the mission work of United Methodist Women. The church is located at 211 Moross, Grosse Pointe Farms. Parking is available behind the church.

EVENTS:

Continued from page 2B

Library

The Grosse Pointe Public Library hosts a variety of programs. To register for the following, visit grossepointelibrary.org.

- Library Bigs & Littles, 10 to 11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 13, at Woods, 20680 Mack, Grosse Pointe Woods.

- Gift Wrapping Party, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 13, at Ewald, 15175 E. Jefferson, Grosse Pointe Park.

- Make a Holiday Centerpiece, 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 13, at Ewald, 15175 E. Jefferson, Grosse Pointe Park.

- Teen Tabletop Game Club, 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 13, at Woods, 20680 Mack, Grosse Pointe Woods.

- Craft-to-Go, all day Monday, Dec. 15, at all branches.

- Christmas Crafting, 4 to 5 p.m. Monday, Dec. 15, at Ewald, 15175 E. Jefferson, Grosse Pointe Park.

- Storytime Shuffle with Miss Mo, 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 16, at Ewald, 15175 E. Jefferson, Grosse Pointe Park.

- Storytime Shuffle with Miss Mo, 11 a.m. to noon Tuesday, Dec. 16, at Ewald, 15175 E. Jefferson, Grosse Pointe Park.

- Slices & Stories: A Teen Book Club with Pizza, 6 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 16, at Woods, 20680 Mack, Grosse Pointe Woods.

- Gift Wrapping Party, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 17, at Ewald, 15175 E. Jefferson, Grosse Pointe Park.

- Crafternoon@the Library, 1 to 3 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 18, at Ewald, 15175 E. Jefferson, Grosse Pointe Park.

- 1,000 Hours Outside Year-End Solstice Celebration, 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 18, at Ewald, 15175 E. Jefferson, Grosse Pointe Park.

- Brave Belle's Book Club, 6 to 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 18, at Ewald, 15175 E. Jefferson, Grosse Pointe Park.

- Holiday Teen Movie Night: "Home Alone," 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 18, at Woods, 20680 Mack, Grosse Pointe Woods.

- Reader Dog, 11 a.m. to noon Saturday, Dec. 20, at Woods, 20680 Mack, Grosse Pointe Woods.

- Holiday Candles and Karaoke, 1 to 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 20, at Ewald, 15175 E. Jefferson, Grosse Pointe Park.

The Family Center

The Family Center of Grosse Pointe and Harper Woods offers free

programs and resources that help build happier, healthier families. The following programs take place at The War Memorial, 32 Lakeshore, Grosse Pointe Farms, unless otherwise noted. Learn more at familycenterhelps.org or RSVP to maryjo@familycenterhelps.org.

- Fireside Yoga, 7 to 8 p.m. Monday, Dec. 15. Bring a mat.

Rotary

The Rotary Club of Grosse Pointe hosts its next meeting at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 17, at Village Grille, 16930 Kercheval, City of Grosse Pointe. Rich Homberg, president and CEO of Detroit Public Television, speaks. Email grossepointerotary@gmail.com.

Blood drives

The American Red Cross hosts the following blood drives:

- 1 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 17, Jefferson Masonic Lodge No. 553, 22000 E. 11 Mile, St. Clair Shores.

- Noon to 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 18, Grosse Pointe United Methodist Church, 211 Moross, Grosse Pointe Farms.

- 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, Dec. 19, Neighborhood Club, 17150 Waterloo, City of Grosse Pointe.

- 7:15 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. Friday, Dec. 19, Henry Ford St. John Hospital,

22101 Moross, Detroit.

- 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 21, St. Margaret Catholic Church, 21201 E. 13 Mile, St. Clair Shores.

- 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 23, Pointe Fitness, 19556 Harper, Harper Woods.

- 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 24, Pointe Fitness, 19556 Harper, Harper Woods.

- 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 24, Fraternal Order of the Eagles, 23631 Greater Mack, St. Clair Shores.

- 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, Dec. 26, St. Clair Shores Senior Center, 20100 Stephens, St. Clair Shores.

Register at redcrossblood.org.

Ford House

The Edsel & Eleanor Ford House, 1100 Lakeshore, Grosse Pointe Shores, offers the follow-

ing programs:

- Home for the Holidays at Ford House, 5:30 to 8 p.m. Thursdays through Sundays, through Dec. 21. Admission costs vary.

- Christmas Concert Over the Cove, 7 to 9 p.m. Friday, Dec. 19. Tickets are \$75 for Friends, \$90 for the public.

- Brunch with Santa, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 21. Costs vary.

For tickets and information, visit fordhouse.org.

Sunrise on Vernier

Sunrise on Vernier, 1850 Vernier, Grosse Pointe Woods, hosts a support group at 4 p.m. the second Wednesday of each month. For more information, call (313) 642-2000.

Adaptive yoga

Yoga Moves Any Body,

in partnership with the Kirk Gibson Foundation, hosts Adaptive Chair Yoga classes at 11:30 a.m. Mondays at Full Lotus Yoga, 20365 Mack, Grosse Pointe Woods. Adaptive yoga benefits those with multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, stroke and other neuromuscular conditions. Cost is \$12 per drop-in class or five classes for \$50 in advance. Visit fulllotusyoga.net.

Toastmasters

Northeastern Toastmasters meets in person at Wayne County Community College District's Mary Ellen Stempfle University Center, 19305 Vernier, Harper Woods, as well as on Zoom, at 7 p.m. the second and fourth Monday of each month. Call (313) 720-8444 for the link and password.

Worship Service

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Sunday School - During Service

WEDNESDAY
10 a.m. - Bible Study
6:30 p.m. - Worship Service

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WE HAVE AN ARTS MINISTRY

6B | FEATURES

Honoring veterans

The War Memorial hosted its annual Veterans Day breakfast Nov. 11.

Photo story by Renee Landuyt



Richard Gerstner, U.S. Army, is moved during taps.

Maria Miller, president and CEO of The War Memorial, welcomes Medal of Honor recipient and keynote speaker Jim McCloughan to the podium.



Vietnam veteran Gary Andersen looks at the cards created by Grosse Pointe elementary and middle school students.



Jim McCloughan was the keynote speaker at the 2025 Veterans Day program at The War Memorial.



Robert Calhoun Jr., U.S. Navy, salutes during the Pledge of Allegiance.

Lisa Mazur-Kurta stands during the service song medley when they played the U.S. Navy song. Mazur-Kurta is a retired Navy medic who served in the Cold War, Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom. She served on the aircraft carrier USS George Washington and the hospital ship USNS Comfort.



Medal of Honor recipient Jim McCloughan, a Vietnam veteran, salutes as he sings the national anthem.



Above, cards created by Grosse Pointe elementary and middle school students. Right, from left, Ventz Potochnik, U.S. Navy; Capt. Jim Semerad, U.S. Navy (ret.); William Edwards, U.S. Army; and Richard Temkow, U.S. Army.



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Consul returns to Italy after four years in Farms

By Laurel Kraus
Staff Writer

Having lived in 15 countries thus far, Allegra Baistrocchi is no stranger to picking up her whole life and moving across the world.

In November, the Italian diplomat returned to her home country following a four-and-a-half-year post heading up the Italian consulate responsible for Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky and Tennessee — during which she called Grosse Pointe Farms home.

“I’m emotional, more so than other times I’ve moved, because this is where I completed my family,” she said.

Baistrocchi arrived in the Farms Sept. 1, 2021, with her mother, husband, 4-year-old daughter, Vittoria, and 3-month-old son, Massimo.

She departed with all the above, plus the additions of her 18-month-old “made in Detroit” boy, Ascanio, a 1968 Mustang and the keys to the city of Toledo.

“(The mayor) said, ‘I don’t know all the people that have had this, but I do know that it was given to Nixon,’ so then when my mom was telling her friends on the phone, she was like, ‘Nobody’s got it since Nixon,’” Baistrocchi laughed. “And I was like, that’s not exactly how this is.”

As the Italian consul with jurisdiction over five states, Baistrocchi spent the last four-plus years providing services on behalf of the Italian government — for Italian citizens living in the U.S., the consulate renews passports and driver’s licenses, legalizes documents such as diplomas and provides aid in medical or legal situations such as a citizen being arrested; for non-Italians, it provides VISAs and citizenships for those of Italian descent — as well as championing the promotion of Italy’s culture in the states.

“It’s been one of the biggest honors of my life to be consul here,” Baistrocchi said. “I loved it. ... I chose Detroit because I thought I could make an impact. I was expecting a small impact and I think we’ve made more than just a small impact here.”

Following four years of Italy-positive events and



Above, Allegra Baistrocchi, right, with her husband, Fabio Scicchitano, and Gov. Gretchen Whitmer at the Grosse Pointe Yacht Club. Right, Baistrocchi and her military officer at the Italian National Day 2025 celebration at The War Memorial in June.



which she moved directly from Washington, D.C., at 6 years old.

Otherwise, she views each place she’s lived as the best location to have lived during that period of her life. Grosse Pointe, in turn, has been the perfect place to grow her family, she said.

“We’ve been very blessed,” Baistrocchi said. “That’s what we always say. At every level, the community is incredible.”

Her mom, she said, found a sense of place volunteering at Grosse Pointe Unitarian Church and playing cards at The Helm. Her daughter received a quality education at Richard Elementary School and her youngest two attended daycare at Christ Church Grosse Pointe.

“People ask me, ‘What’s it like living there?’ Because they’re imagining I’m living in the ghetto because I said Detroit,” Baistrocchi said. “And I say, ‘Do you know ‘The Truman show’? Where you’re walking down the road and everybody recognizes you, smiles, waves. You have people walking their dog and people picking up their Grosse Pointe newspaper. That’s how I describe it.”

programming, for the first time the area’s top five internet impressions related to Italy no longer include references to the Italian mafia.

“The Italian population is the least represented in American jails,” Baistrocchi emphasized. “So the stereotype is completely unwarranted. Completely not part of anything that is current, but it is just perpetrated by ‘The Godfather’ and those types of things. So for the first time Italy and mafia not being (at the top of the metrics) for me was huge.”

Rather, the top internet impressions related to Italy currently include tourism, recipes and food, sustainability and aerospace.

Italy, in fact, is third in the world for specialization of space technologies, as well as the fourth largest exporter of satellites. The International Space Station is 40 percent made in Italy and the first European woman to command the ISS is Italian astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti.

As far as sustainability, this month Italy as a country was invited for the first time to be part of Detroit’s annual Sustainable Urban Design Summit after Baistrocchi made the case that Italy is first in the European Union for recycling — last year, 91 percent of Italy’s urban waste was recycled — is the second circular economy among leading EU countries and is first in efficiency use of

resources. The largest privately-owned renewable energy company in the world also happens to be Italian.

Further, during Baistrocchi’s tenure, the Detroit consulate has tripled its output of services, going from issuing 600 to 700 passports a year, to this year emitting 2,000 for the second year in a row with the same number of staff.

“(Italy’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs) saw what I did here and they said, ‘We want you to replicate this around all of our embassies and consulates around the world,’” said Baistrocchi, as she heads home to a position within the directorate in charge of promoting Italy abroad.

She was headhunted for the position exactly 18 months ago.

“They wrote to me the day that I was giving birth to Ascanio,” she recalled vividly. “I was in my gown with my cap, with all the things, and they were about to wheel me in and I was like, ‘Wait, I have to answer an email.’”

Italian diplomats serve in posts abroad for a minimum of two years, with the exception of war zones, and a maximum of four — though Baistrocchi was given a special exemption to remain in Detroit an additional six months to complete various efforts she had undertaken.

Diplomats may serve two posts back-to-back, but cannot remain abroad more than eight

years so as to not get too rooted in those communities and sway from national interest.

Being that Baistrocchi came to Detroit directly from a four-year post as deputy ambassador in Sri Lanka, she now is required to return to Italy for two to four years — a rule she certainly isn’t complaining about.

“It’ll be much simpler this time, because we’re going back to the other grandparents, cousins

and family,” she said. “(My kids) have never lived in Italy. My daughter left when she was 10-months-old and she’s lived there less than 15 months cumulatively in her nine years.”

As a fourth-generation Italian diplomat who was raised living at her father’s postings abroad, Baistrocchi said she “loves violently,” every place she’s lived with the possible exception of communist Russia, to

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Baistrocchi’s children, Vittoria, Massimo and Ascanio, with their cousins Lavinia and Valerio at Pier Park.

Happy Holiday Season

to you and yours

from Village Locksmith



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GROSSE POINTE Gabby



POINTING YOU IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION WITH REAL-LIFE ADVICE!

Neighbor's lights are too bright and blinding

Dear Gabby: My neighbor's Christmas light display is intense. Think Clark Griswold meets Times Square visible from outer space. It is festive, yes, but it also shines directly into my bedroom at all hours.

I want to stay on good terms because this is Grosse Pointe after all, but I am losing sleep. How do I handle this without being labeled the neighborhood Scrooge? — Overlit in the Shores

Dear Overlit: There are two types of holiday decorators: the tasteful twinkle light people and the individuals who

treat their lawn as a competitive sport. Your neighbor is the latter. He is not decorating. He is performing.

The key is to approach with charm, not confrontation. Bring over some cookies and say something like, "Your lights look amazing and my kids love them, but I am having a little trouble sleeping because one of the bright ones beams right into my window. Any chance you could angle it or put it on a timer?" Polite. Friendly. Not Grinchy.

If they refuse, then it is time for Plan B, which is simple: blackout cur-

tains, eye masks and Melatonin gummies. We are protecting peace at all costs.

Remember, only a handful of weeks stand between you and darkness again. And then you can look forward to the next neighborhood issue, which is, of course, the snow blower that starts at 6 a.m.

Stay bright!

— Gabby

We love problem-solving and giving advice! Please send us your questions & problems to advice@grossepointe-news.com.



Mother-in-law may be asking too much

DEAR ANNIE: My mother-in-law is 81 and a widow. She currently lives alone. Her health is declining, and she has been talking about wanting my husband and me to move in with her and "take care of her and the house." She is adamantly against moving into assisted living or anything similar. I already cook meals and take them to her weekly. I help with some household chores and have been maintaining the 10 acres the house sits on. My husband and I talk to her on the phone daily and have for the past two years since my father-in-law got ill and passed away. My husband is dis-

abled, and I have been his full-time caregiver for over 12 years. Moving in with her would add to my responsibilities to care for both of them.

She has suggested that we sell our house and buy her house from her. Her house is completely paid off and is worth about \$300,000 more than our home. We currently owe about \$250,000 on our home due to refinancing, where we withdrew cash a couple of years ago. Our only income is my husband's disability pay, which currently covers the bills but not much else. Her moving into our house would not be an option; it's just too small. There has been no talk

of any kind of compensation for me to cook, clean, run errands, take care of the 10 acres, drive her to appointments and be her caregiver.

Her will states that everything will be divided equally between her two sons upon her death. Her assets are at least \$1 million and probably closer to \$1.25 million.

We live 20 minutes from her. Her other son lives on the other side of the country and hasn't visited in over 17 years and rarely calls her. If we buy her house, she plans to give the money to her other son as "payment" for his half of the value of the house. I love her dearly but

honestly don't know if I could handle the added stress. We have opposite political and social views. My husband and I would have no privacy, and her bedroom would be directly across the hall from ours. There isn't even a separate living room.

I think if we were to move in, we shouldn't have to pay for the house, and I should not have to become the live-in cook, housekeeper, nurse, etc. Am I wrong? Also, how should we split the cost of major repairs as they come up? — Paying to Be a Caregiver

DEAR PAYING: It does sound like she is taking advantage of your kindness. The best thing to do is to set clear boundaries of what you are willing to do and not do. It is not unreasonable for you to request some sort of compensation for all the extra work you would be taking on if you moved into her house.

Try not to get into a competitive argument about your husband's brother, and focus instead on what will make you happy. Not visiting his recently widowed mother for 17 years shows that he is neither considerate nor kind to her. Let him live



Dear Annie

by Annie Lane

with his choices.

You sound like a kind caregiver, but when you give to others, it is important it fill your own cup first. Remember, too, that you are not obligated to sell your house and move into hers

DEAR ANNIE: Now that my youngest left for college, everyone keeps telling me I've "entered my freedom era." The truth is, I feel anything but free. I miss the chaos of packed lunches, carpool arguments and sports gear in the hallway.

My two grown kids call, but only when they're driving or walking somewhere. Conversations feel rushed, like I'm a box they're checking off. When they do come home, they're on their phones or making plans with friends. I end up cooking, cleaning and pretending I'm not hurt.

My husband seems to be adjusting fine. He's golfing more, and when I try to talk about how lonely I feel, he says I should "find a hobby."

How do I build a new life without resenting the

people I raised to leave? — Empty Nest, Full Heart

DEAR FULL HEART: Your kids aren't rejecting you; they're practicing adulthood, which you actually did a good job preparing them for. Still, your feelings are real, and "find a hobby" is not the deep emotional support you were hoping for.

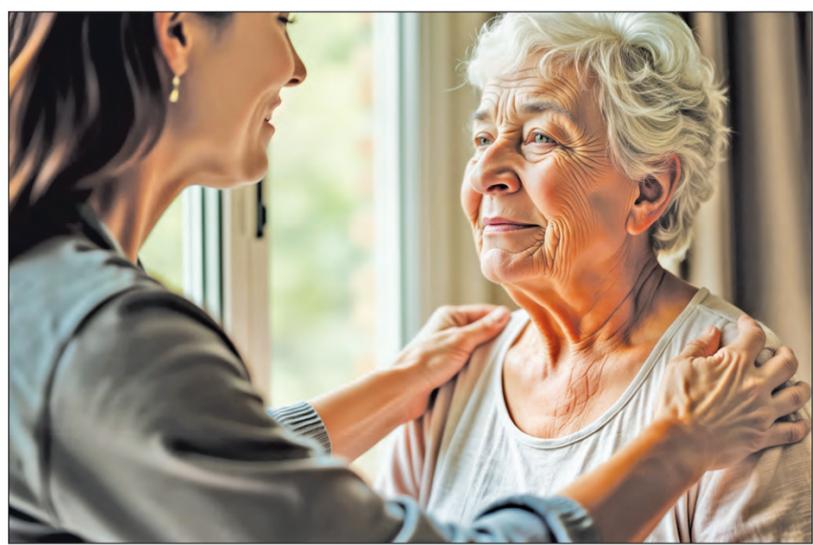
Start by gently telling your husband, "I'm really grieving this stage. Can we plan one new thing to enjoy together?" A class, a trip, even a weekly date night counts.

With your kids, be specific: "Can we have one real catch-up call on Sundays?" or "During your next visit, let's cook dinner together, phones away." Grown kids do better with clear, kind requests than with silent hurt.

You're not losing your role. You're rewriting it — and you get a say in the new chapter.

Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com.

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We Tried It!

by Anna Lizer



I'm in the phase of my life where many of my friends are having their first babies. I've decided my role is clear. I want to be the cool aunt until I'm lucky enough to have my own kids. The one who shows up with the best gifts and the little things that make new parents' lives easier. Yes, gifts are fun and cute, but sometimes you can actually buy something that is both adorable and genuinely useful.

If you want to be the cool grandparent, aunt, uncle or family friend, get the baby clothing from Magnetic Me. Its signature modal Magnetic Footie is the kind

of gift that makes exhausted parents look at you with tears of gratitude during those middle-of-the-night diaper changes. The sleeper is made from sustainable TENCEL modal, which is silky soft, breathable, temperature-regulating and resistant to pilling and fading. It's 94 percent TENCEL modal and 6 percent elastane, so it feels luxurious but also can be tossed in the washing machine.

The star of the show is the magnetic closure



system that runs from the neck to the upper thigh for sizes up to 3 months and from the neck to the crotch

for larger sizes. It lets you dress the baby or change a diaper quickly and quietly, which is a game changer when it's 3 a.m. and no one is in the mood for tiny snaps or zippers. The magnets are SewSafe secured, meaning they're safely sealed and stitched inside multiple layers of fabric, making them completely inaccessible to little hands.

Other smart details include fold-over mitten cuffs for sizes 0 to 6 months to prevent scratches, and

grippy footies for sizes 9 to 12 months and up, so little movers don't slip. The quality is excellent and every person I've given these to has raved about them. And if you really want to win at gift giving, they also make matching pajamas for older siblings and adults. Hello, holiday season.

Magnetic Me has adorable seasonal prints, gender-neutral options and classic boy and girl designs. If you want to give a gift that's cute, practical and guaranteed to be used constantly, this is the one.

Final verdict: Five out

of five alligators for making me look like the most thoughtful gift giver in the room and for making diaper changes less of a battle. Available at <https://magneticme.com/> for about \$45.

We LOVE testing out new things! Tell us about your favorite item or something you want us to try for you! Drop us a line at media@grossepointenews.com.



5 Out Of 5

Pommes Boulangere

Courtesy of Mombeau's Table

This is a simple, French-inspired potato dish known as "baker's potatoes." The story goes that in a small French village, ovens were scarce, so the townspeople would bring their earthenware to the baker, filled with potatoes, onions and whatever herbs they had had.

Each dish would get a ladle of broth because cream and butter were for special occasions only. Then they would be placed in the oven after the bread was finished baking. The oven would still be hot from the bread but not too hot to burn the potatoes. They could cook low and slow. They would form a beautiful brown and crispy top while absorbing all of the broth. And the onions would soften and almost melt away.

By late afternoon, the people would gather around the bakery for the comforting smells of freshly baked bread and savory potatoes. Hence the name, "baker's potatoes."

In this recipe, I use beef broth along with deeply seasoned caramelized onions to mimic a cozy bowl of French onion soup topped with gruyere cheese. The bonus here is that it's all made in one pot.

The onions are first cooked slowly with woody thyme and rosemary. Anchovy paste and Worcestershire sauce are added to intensify the savory flavor.

Then, I remove them and start layering in the potatoes and cheese. The brown bits left behind by the onions will release themselves back into the broth. The broth is added, almost to the top, and cooked uncovered for about an hour. I like to

use a five-quart cast iron pot for this. But you could use any oven safe dish. Just make sure it's not too wide so you can make three layers of potatoes.

This would be perfect alongside a prime rib at your holiday feast because they aren't overly rich. They are just comforting and flavorful. Always a favorite at Mombeau's table.

Cheers, Mombeau

Pommes Boulangere

1 tbsp butter

1 tbsp olive oil

3 yellow onions, thinly sliced

3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce

2 tsp anchovy paste

2 tsp fresh thyme leaves

2 tsp fresh rosemary leaves, minced

4 lbs yukon gold potatoes (about 5-6 large), thinly sliced

2 cups gruyere cheese, grated

2½ cups beef broth

1 bouillon cube

2 tbsp butter cubed

Salt and pepper

Preheat your oven to 400 degrees. In an oven safe, five-quart cast iron pot over medium heat, heat the oil and butter until melted. Add the onions, garlic, herbs, a pinch of salt and a few turns of pepper. Let them cook slowly, stirring now and then,



PHOTO BY KAREN FERGUSON

until they turn soft and golden, about 35 to 40 minutes. If they start to stick, add a splash of water to loosen the brown bits and deepen their flavor.

Once the onions have about five more minutes to cook, pour in the Worcestershire sauce and anchovy paste. Mix well to combine. When the onions are

caramelized and jammy, turn off the heat and remove to a bowl. Leave the brown bits in the pot. In a small saucepan, heat the beef broth with the bouillon cube until dissolved.

Start layering one third of the potatoes in the bottom of the pot that you cooked the onions in. Season with a pinch of salt and pepper.

Next, add in half of the onion mixture. Then one-third of the grated cheese. Repeat another layer with one-third potatoes, the rest of the onions and another third of the cheese.

Finish with remaining potatoes, salt and pepper. Pour the broth mixture over the top of the potatoes. The liquid should be barely visible

underneath the top layer.

Finish everything off with the final layer of gruyere. Top with the two tablespoons of cubed butter. Cook for one hour and 15 minutes, uncovered, until the cheese is brown and bubbly. (Tip: If the potatoes begin to get too brown, cover with aluminum foil to prevent them from burning.)

Authentic wine

If you are a typical once-a-week or -month U.S. wine consumer, the following question may be a little mystical: Do you seek to buy authentic wines? Or to be more precise, do you care if that merlot you recently bought has an aroma and a taste that have nothing to do with merlot?

The question isn't likely to have much meaning for most Americans who drink

wine. Even a lot of wine collectors have no answer to this question. The reason is that wine education in this country has been pretty woeful over the decades.

Many people think that the higher the score given to a wine, the better it is. Many people think that the more you pay for a bottle of wine, the better it is. But both assumptions are about their validity, as are

movie reviews or music style preferences.

People who love western flicks may not like horror films. People who want feel-good comedies might find most of Shakespeare to be off-putting. Debussy lovers probably dislike rap. It's the same with wine.

I adore dry Rieslings — the drier the better. I know people who detest such wines. All they drink are reds; they consider

any white to be a pretender. To them, white wines are not even wine.

My question above about authenticity really has very little meaning to most people since we are all so individual in our tastes. But now and then a bit of light shines through.

A good friend has always been a dedicated consumer of red wines. He visited a Napa Valley winery some time ago



and purchased a rather expensive merlot. When he got home, he waited a year before opening it, and within minutes, he called me.

It was terrible, he said. I had warned him that the wine was relatively expensive and had received a lot of high praise from some reviewers, but I told him I didn't like it very much.

"You were right," he said, admitting the wine was not only boring, but too expensive (more than \$100). I suggested he try a \$25 merlot that I recently wrote about. He called me back a week later.

"Now, THAT's a very nice wine," he said. "Why is it so low in price?"

I said the expensive wine he bought had gotten a high score and was expensive partly because it was made to be "impressive," but did not have any merlot character. The \$25 wine is simply authentic, which is a term most people who drink wine never use.

The cheaper merlot

had less alcohol than the expensive one and had better structure, so it was designed to go with food.

My friend said that his little educational excursion into expensive wine was a lesson worth paying to experience. "That taught me a lesson," he said. I said, "Sometimes a wine is just priced too high for reasons other than quality."

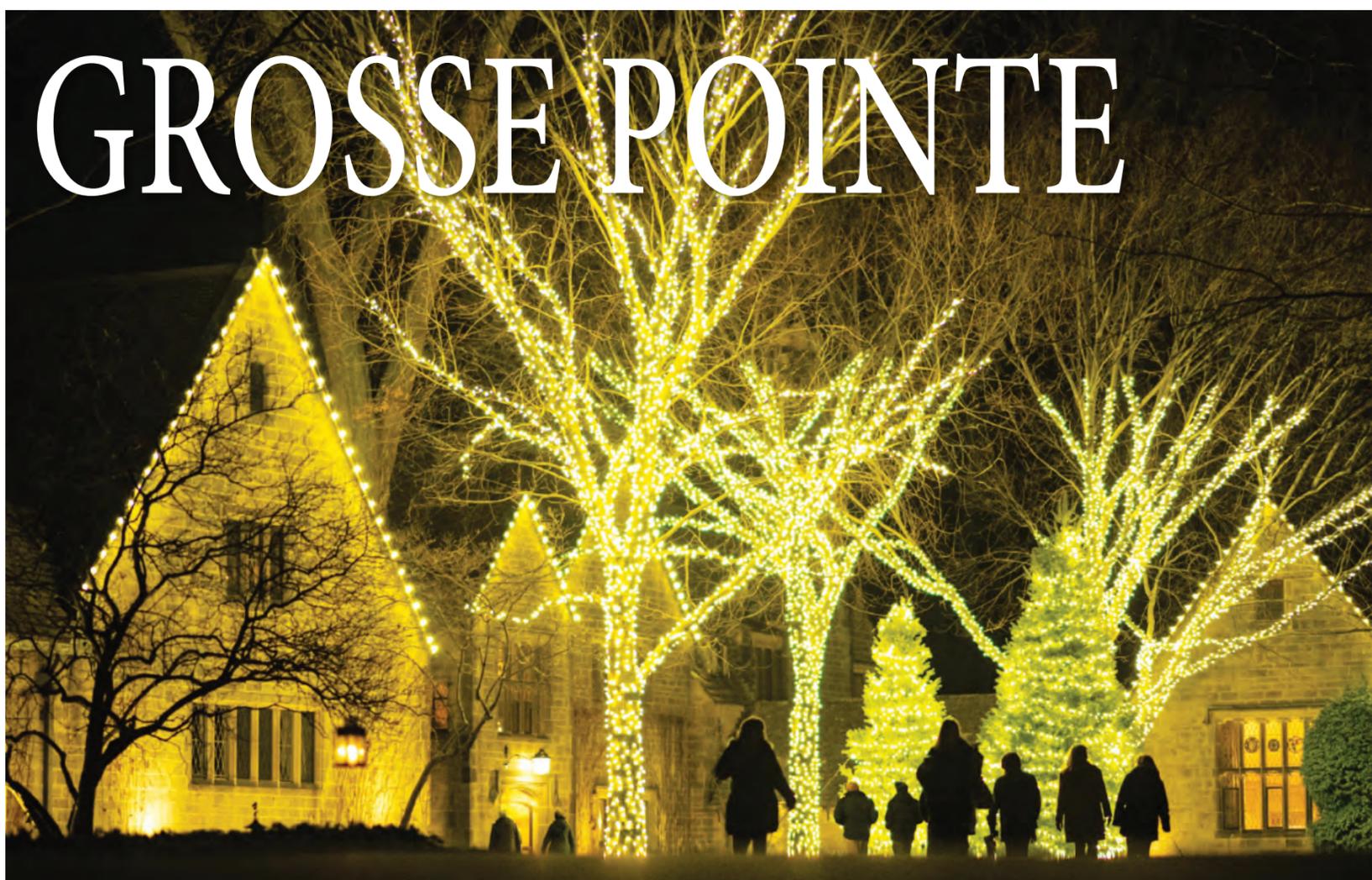
Wine of the Week:

2021 La Prenda Merlot, Sonoma Mountain (\$29) — The bright herb-graced blackberry aroma of this fine wine from Sonoma Valley winemaker Mike Cox is a product of mountain-grown fruit and the after-taste is rich and oriented toward medium-weight, red meat dishes.

To find out more about Sonoma County resident Dan Berger, visit the Creators Syndicate webpage at www.creators.com.

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GROSSE POINTE

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

...and festive things to do!



By Olivia Monette
Special Writer

From twinkling lights and cozy cocoa stops to quick weekend escapes and at-home traditions, there's no shortage of ways to make the season merry. Whether you're staying close to home or planning a little getaway, here are our favorite ways to embrace the holidays this year.

FORD HOUSE EVENTS

Home for the Holidays at Ford House

Nov. 30 to Dec. 21, Thursdays to Sundays, 5:30 to 8 p.m.

The Ford House transforms into a winter wonderland with sparkling lights, festive music and live carolers. Take a serene, one-mile stroll through the lighted gardens and historic grounds, then step inside the Main Residence to see the Fords' signature elegant holiday décor. Don't miss the Christmas train looping through the Recreation Building or Santa's cozy corner in the old laundry room.

Tickets and info: fordhouse.org

Brunch with Santa at Ford House

Sunday, Dec. 21, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

A Grosse Pointe holiday favorite! Families can enjoy a hearty breakfast buffet, hot cocoa, and a personal visit from Santa himself. Capture keepsake photos and soak in the magic of the season inside the beautifully decorated Ford House.

Tickets: fordhouse.org



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FORD HOUSE





PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WAR MEMORIAL

Guests watch while Santa's helicopter arrives for breakfast with the kids at the War Memorial, above.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GREENFIELD VILLAGE



PHOTOS COURTESY OF EASTERN MARKET

Eastern Market's Holiday Market, two photos above, takes place this Sunday with vendors, fresh goods and holiday treats for all.



LOCAL EVENTS AND OUTINGS

Breakfast with Santa at The War Memorial

Dec. 14, 9:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

Families get an amazing view from the ballroom windows as Santa arrives by helicopter for breakfast with the kiddies by The War Memorial's own chef! This heartwarming event also features time to mingle with Santa himself and an array of holiday crafts.

Tickets: warmemorial.org/holidaytraditions

Greenfield Village Holiday Nights

Step back in time at Greenfield Village in Dearborn, where lantern-lit streets, horse-drawn carriages and costumed carolers recreate Christmases of centuries past. Roast chestnuts, visit Santa and end the evening with fireworks that light up the historic village sky.

Tickets: thehenryford.org/holidaynights

Eastern Market Holiday Market at the shops at Cadillac Square

Sunday, Dec. 14 and Sunday, Dec. 21, 2025

A Detroit tradition! Shop artisan gifts, locally made treats and festive greenery under the red sheds while carolers fill the air with holiday tunes. Grab a coffee from Flyleaf before heading downtown, then make a day of it with ice skating at Campus Martius.

Info: easternmarket.org/events/holiday-market-2025

The Nutcracker at Music Hall Detroit

Dec. 20 to 21

Treat the family to the season's signature ballet, performed by the World Ballet Company. Experience all the magic of Christmas in one stunning performance and make memories you'll cherish forever.

Tickets: musichall.org

Enjoy vintage auto rides, above left, shopping, food and more all through lantern-lit Greenfield Village.

Fa-la-la-la-la along with the live carolers, left, at Greenfield Village's Holiday Nights. You'll feel like you're in a historic holiday dream with all the authentic sights and sounds.



GIVE THE GIFT THAT ROARS!

MARCH 12 - APRIL 5
Detroit Opera House
BroadwayInDetroit.com

Groups (10-):
broadwayindetroitgroups@atgentertainment.com
 or call 888-746-1799, Option 3.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF GLITTER & SCOTCH

It's a holiday pajama extravaganza at Glitter & Scotch! Check out these cute and cozy sets, above, in the prettiest and most festive prints. They're the perfect gift for all the lovely ladies on your Christmas list.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SMALL FAVORS

Small Favors is a gift buyer's dream. You'll find something fun and useful for everyone in the family — and friends, too. There are also holiday items for the home to make entertaining merry and bright, above. Come get in the gifting mood!

AROUND TOWN

Shop Local on Mack, The Hill or in The Village

Skip the shipping delays and enjoy stress-free local shopping. From sparkly accessories at El's Boutique to home décor at The League Shop, kid gifts at Small Favors, skin care at Pointelle or fashion finds at Savvy Chic and Glitter & Scotch, your list will be done in style — and wrapped with care.

Holiday house at Lakeshore and Moross

One of the brightest and most beloved holiday displays in the area! Pile the family into the car, cue up your favorite Christmas playlist and drive by in matching pajamas with cocoa in hand.



This amazing Lakeshore Drive home, left, has become a traditional view for Pointers looking to kick off all the holiday feels. Check it out and drive safely!

Skate, sip and stroll

Bundle up and head to one of Grosse Pointe's outdoor park rinks for an evening skate under the lights. Afterward, warm up with hot chocolate or coffee from Flyleaf and enjoy a walk through The Village's charming storefronts.



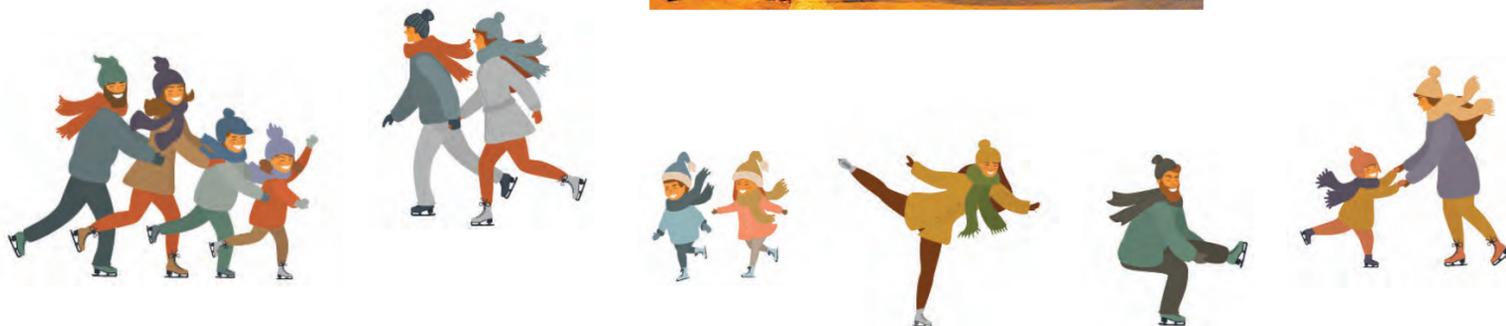
The Village is alight with holiday joy all through the Christmas season, left. Get out and enjoy the unique shops and restaurants for some winter togetherness.

Visit your city's website for park and rink hours:

grossepointefarms.org

grossepointecity.org

grossepointepark.org



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COURTESY PHOTO

Grosse Pointe skaters hit the ice at lakefronts and parks all over the cities for some great outdoor fun.

MORE AROUND TOWN

Polar plunge tradition

Feeling brave? Take the ultimate dip in Lake St. Clair with friends for a cold-weather-thrill — then warm up afterward with brunch and laughter at a local café. It's the kind of story that gets better every year.

Park and play

Round up friends for an impromptu holiday football game or snowball fight at a local park, followed by warm drinks and laughter. Simple, spontaneous fun is often the best kind of holiday magic.



MINI GETAWAYS AND WEEKEND ADVENTURES

Cozy weekend at the Perry Hotel

Just a few hours north, Petoskey's Perry Hotel offers charming, old-fashioned escapes. Enjoy twinkle-lit downtown shopping, snow-dusted waterfront views and fireside cocktails.

For info, contact the Perry Hotel: theperryhotel.com

Ski Michigan

From the slopes of Boyne Mountain and Nub's Nob to Crystal Mountain or even Pine Knob for a quick day trip, Michigan offers endless ways to enjoy the snow. Pack the car, grab the family and turn it into a weekend of skiing, tubing and après-ski fun.

Check out your favorite:

Boyne Mountain: boynemountain.com

Nub's Nob: nubsnob.com

Crystal Mountain: crystallmountain.com

Pine Knob: pineknobskiarea.com



PHOTO COURTESY OF NUB'S NOB

Nub's Nob trails, above.

COZY FUN AT HOME

DIY for a cause: Blanketed With Love

Order fleece fabric online and spend an evening making tie blankets for Blanketed With Love, a local organization that donates them to those in need. Add a Christmas movie and hot cocoa and you've got the perfect night in — cozy, charitable and full of heart.

Learn more: facebook.com/BlanketedWithLove

Family game night

Snowy night? No problem. Gather the family for a game marathon featuring UNO Remix, Rummikub, Uzzle or the classic Jenga. Add snacks, a fire and maybe a competitive streak or two for instant fun.

Holiday movie and pajama drive

Slip into matching Christmas PJs, pop some popcorn and stream your favorite holiday classics. Afterward, pile into the car to see Grosse Pointe's neighborhood light displays —it's simple, seasonal magic right at home.



If you dare! A cold water plunge, left, invigorates the bravest and healthiest souls.

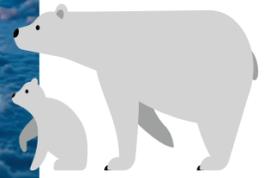


PHOTO COURTESY OF PERRY HOTEL

The Perry Hotel, above, is a year-round destination for relaxation, fun and togetherness. The holidays are no different! Enjoy the Christmas ambiance and lakeside beauty of this historic locale for a holiday jaunt you will never forget.



COURTESY PHOTO

Experience a fun craft night and share some TLC with the Blanketed With Love project. Make a warm blanket, above, to be donated to those in need this holiday season. It's a way to wrap the word with love for Christmas!



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PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER (MGM).

Channing Tatum as Jackson Briggs and German Shepherd Lana 5 as Lulu in the 2022 movie "Dog," written by Reid Carolin and Brett Rodriguez and directed by Reid Carolin and Channing Tatum.

MOVIE REVIEW
 "Dog"
 2022 - Rated PG-13
 1 hr 41 min
 ★★★★★

The actor Channing Tatum is one of those handsome jocks that makes a ton of movies. Over the years, he's starred in films like "Coach Carter" and "21 Jump Street" which, truth be told, aren't very challenging. However, I thought he did a decent job playing a more dramatic role in the 2022 film "Dog." After taking a five-year hiatus from Hollywood, he co-directed it along with Reid Carolin. This was a first for both of them and I must admit I was pretty impressed.

For some reason, the film is listed as a comedy. While there are some lighter moments in it, I'd be more inclined to describe it as a touching

road trip movie. It's one of those sweet films where two damaged creatures are at odds with each other at the start, but over time become best friends. I freely admit that while I'm not a dog person (maybe because I was bitten by one when I was a kid), I quite enjoyed this movie.

Tatum plays Jackson Briggs, a former Army Ranger who's a bit

down on his luck. He can't return to active duty because of an unspecified closed head injury. So he's taken a job at a fast food restaurant to make ends meet. At a gathering of his old squadron to remember one of their fallen comrades, Riley, who died in a car crash, he asks his commanding officer if he'd give him a recommendation. He's told that if he



Jackson (Tatum) and Lulu hit the road.



Taking in some dramatic scenery.

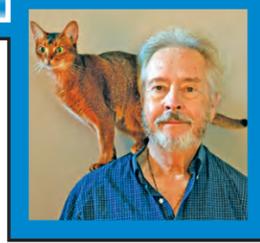


Carrying his worn out pal.



A Sad Farewell.

Movie Junkie Mark
 by Mark Domin
 "Life is too short to watch mediocre movies"



drives Riley's patrol dog Lulu to the family funeral, he'd consider putting in a word for him.

Little does Jackson know what he's getting into. Lulu is a specially-trained Belgian Malinois (similar to a German Shepherd), and has done several tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. He was injured and was sent back to the states to an uncertain future. Both Jackson and Lulu are suffering from PTSD, and Lulu is prone to attack just about anything that moves, including Jackson.

It's truly a match made in hell. After an eventful introduction, the two set off on a road trip from Washington state to Arizona in Jackson's beat up old Ford Bronco.

Like most good films in this genre, they encounter several colorful characters along the way. One evening Briggs meets up with a couple of free-spirited women in a bar and end up at their place with a potential three-way in the offing. I won't spoil it with the details, but let's just say their tryst is rudely interrupted. He also visits his estranged wife and young daughter, which doesn't go well either.

One of my favorite scenes in the movie is when Lulu escapes and dashes off into the woods. When Briggs finally catches up to her, he finds himself at a secluded pot farmer's plantation. He's apprehended because he's mistaken for a narc and is handcuffed to a chair.

After freeing himself and explaining why he's there, the farmer, his wife, and Briggs get along famously. They're a couple of old hippies and their conversations are a hoot. It's a much needed diversion from the more dramatic parts of the film.

When the pair hit San Francisco, Briggs concocts an ingenious plan to get a free room. He pretends he's a blind soldier and Lulu plays the part of his service dog. He goes up to the front desk of a high-end hotel and he's treated like an absolute king as a thanks for his service. The room, champagne and an extravagant meal are all on the house. Until... (I'm not spoiling it for you).

Another more poignant meeting is when Briggs visits Lulu's brother, who also was a Ranger dog. His owner describes just how hard it is to retrain these types of specially-trained animals to be reintroduced into society. They've been taught to attack people, especially those that look Middle-Eastern. He spends some time with Briggs, working to deprogram Lulu.

I thought "Dog" was a heartfelt drama about two damaged souls who work together to heal each other. The movie could have gone into schmaltzy territory, but it never did. I think this is one of the best performances I've seen from Tatum and he did a commendable job co-directing the film as well. I look forward to seeing

what he does next. I also enjoyed the fact that the music never got overly sappy during the more emotional scenes. If you're in the mood for something a bit different, give this one a watch.

Currently streaming on Netflix and Prime. And to rent on Amazon, Apple TV, YouTube, Fandango, and other services.

My rating system:

★ A real stinker. A movie that is so bad, you're embarrassed to admit you've seen it, but you have to rate it nonetheless.

★★ So-so. Not a total waste of time, but you would have been better off reading a good book.

★★★ Pretty good. In fact, if there weren't any other movies in your queue, you might watch it again.

★★★★ One you'd recommend to friends.

★★★★★ So good you'd actually buy it!

If you have any movie suggestions, feel free to email me at: dominmark@yahoo.com.

Also, if you're looking for more recommendations, be sure to check out my blog: moviejunkie-mark.blogspot.com.



Hanging with the pot farmer.



Playtime at the beach.



Lulu has the blues.

Weekly Challenge

UNIVERSAL Sudoku Puzzle

	5	9		2	1	8		
2					8			6
		7		9				
	9			1				5
				8				
3				6				4
				4		6		
	2		1					3
		4	3	5		2	1	

Complete the grid so every row, column and 3 x 3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

Previous puzzle solution

5	6	2	7	1	4	9	3	8
3	4	9	8	5	6	2	1	7
8	1	7	3	2	9	6	5	4
2	5	1	6	3	8	7	4	9
9	7	6	2	4	1	5	8	3
4	3	8	9	7	5	1	6	2
7	8	3	1	6	2	4	9	5
6	2	5	4	9	3	8	7	1
1	9	4	5	8	7	3	2	6

12/11 DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★☆
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Contract Bridge

DOUBLE TROUBLE

West dealer.
East-West vulnerable.
NORTH
♠ K
♥ Q 7 4 3 2
♦ 9 3 2
♣ 10 8 7 4
WEST
♠ J 10 6 4
♥ 10 6
♦ A K 8
♣ A 9 5 3
EAST
♠ 9 8 5 3 2
♥ 9
♦ 7 4
♣ K Q J 6 2
SOUTH
♠ A Q 7
♥ A K J 8 5
♦ Q J 10 6 5
♣ —

The bidding:
West North East South
Pass Pass Pass 1♥
Dble 3♥ 3♠ 4♦
Dble 4♥ Pass Pass
Dble
Opening lead — jack of spades.

The main reason why some players win more national and world championships than others is, without question, superior skills. But on occasion, luck — in the form of being in the right place at the right time — can play an important role.

Here's a good example of how the luck factor works. Bob Hamman, one of the world's best, was playing in the 1983 Life Master Pairs, and on the first

of two deals opened the bidding with two notrump. The next player doubled, everybody passed, and although the defenders could have taken the first six tricks with a different opening lead, Hamman wound up making nine tricks for a score of 890 points.

On the second deal, the one shown, Hamman held the South hand and got to four hearts doubled. Offhand, it might seem that West doubled once or twice too often, but be that as it may, he exercised his constitutional right to free speech and followed this by leading the jack of spades.

It did not take Hamman long to teach West a lesson. He won the jack with dummy's king, cashed the A-K of trump and A-Q of spades, discarding two diamonds from dummy, and then led the five of diamonds toward dummy's singleton nine. West compounded his previous felonies by following low, and the outcome was that Hamman made the doubled contract with three overtricks to score another 890 points!

One important principle that emerges is that if your opponents are trying for a slam (which is what Hamman's four-diamond bid suggested), it's not a very good policy to double them when they stop at game.

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by Steve Becker

Royal Stars Weekly Horoscopes

Moon Alert: There are no restrictions to shopping or important decisions today. The Moon is in VIRGO.

Happy Birthday for Thursday, December 11, 2025:

You are committed, progressive and idealistic. You have strong feelings of social responsibility. This is a year of change that will bring you increased personal freedom. Seek out new opportunities and be ready to act fast. Expect to travel and expand your horizons. You will make new friends.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
Work-related travel is likely for many of you. Plus, today you feel more confident and happier about your situation. However, don't take on more than you can handle, which you might be tempted to do. Although you might feel sympathetic to the needs of someone less fortunate, don't give away the farm. Tonight: Enjoy working.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
Today your conversations with others might be a bit dreamy or idealistic, but that's OK. Certainly, you'll be more sympathetic and listen to someone with genuine interest. In fact, this is an excellent day for any kind of group activity — casual get-togethers, classes, meetings or conferences. Enjoy schmoozing with others. Tonight: Socialize!

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
If your work requires an imagination, you'll be in the right frame of mind today. If possible, try to leave the humdrum routine of your everyday world and do something different. You'll also be sympathetic to a co-worker who might need to share their problems. Tonight: Relax.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
This is a fantastic day for artists, designers, teachers and people who need imagination to entertain worlds of fantasy and make-believe. This same influence might cause you to fall in love or develop a crush on someone. It's a great day for a short trip and discussions. Tonight: Warm connections.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
You might impress someone with your moneymaking ideas today, especially a group, because your positive attitude and enthusiasm make you convincing! Meanwhile, some of you will feel sympathetic to a family member. Tonight: Maintain your belongings.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
Today the Moon is in your sign dancing with lucky Jupiter, which makes you feel good. You'll enjoy being with congenial people. You also might be concerned for the welfare of someone and will help them if you can. All group activities are favored today. Tonight: You're happy.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
Today Mercury is in your Money House dancing with Neptune, making you more sensitive to your surroundings. This will also increase your interest in literature, poetry and music. Nevertheless, it's a poor day for practical decisions about money. Caution. Tonight: Enjoy privacy.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
This is a wonderful day to interact with friends and groups, especially with people from other cultures or different countries. You also might explore future travel ideas or opportunities in medicine, the law and publishing. Nurture your dreams. Tonight: Be friendly.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
You make a positive impression on others today because the Moon is at the top of your chart calling attention to you. (Some people will know personal details about your private life.) Meanwhile, mystical subjects will intrigue you today, including studying art, religion, poetry, music or the occult. Tonight: You're admired.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
Today it might be personally rewarding for you to be involved in a charitable society or group whose mandate is to help those in need. This will perfectly dovetail with your sympathetic nature today, combined with your interest in being involved with groups. Tonight: Explore and learn.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
You stand to benefit from the wealth and resources of someone else today, so keep your pockets open. This is also an excellent day to ask for a loan; however, make sure you're grounded in reality before going into debt. Tonight: Check your finances.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
The study of something foreign, mystical or spiritual will appeal to you today. You might want to help those who are less fortunate in a faraway place. Meanwhile, discussions with those who are close to you will be upbeat and fun and flirtatious! Tonight: Be cooperative and attentive.

BORN TODAY
Actress Hailee Steinfeld (1996), actress Teri Garr (1944), actress Rita Moreno (1931).

Universal Crossword

Edited by Taylor Johnson December 11, 2025

- ACROSS**
- 1 Person who's on the trail
 - 6 "See you later!"
 - 9 2025 Best Picture winner
 - 14 Savory flavor
 - 15 Kendrick Lamar's music style
 - 16 Iraqi currency
 - 17 Silent Marx brother
 - 18 Boxer Muhammad T-shirt style
 - 19 "Curd-filled dairy product"
 - 23 Drag queen's approval
 - 24 Not online, to a texter
 - 25 "Creamy condiment"
 - 32 Put back to zero
 - 33 "You've got mail" co.
 - 34 French water brand
 - 36 Snakelike fish
 - 37 Doom and _____
 - 39 "Frozen" queen
 - 40 "Dark green herb"
 - 43 Identity thief's target, for short
 - 44 Japanese demon of folklore
 - 45 NFL great Manning
 - 46 Stubborn beast
 - 47 Raptors, on scoreboards
 - 48 "Maya and the Robot" author L. Ewing
 - 50 Food made in one's own kitchen ... or what the ingredients in the starred clues' answers could be used for, fittingly?
 - 55 Mushroom in much Asian cuisine
 - 57 Place to wear safety goggles and a white coat
 - 58 Put into law
 - 61 Ambulance alarm
 - 62 _____ and left no crumbs (did amazing)
 - 63 Indian currency
 - 64 Trolley bell sound
 - 65 "How come?"
 - 66 Airplane walkway
 - 10 What cats are said to be gifted with
 - 11 White Monopoly bills
 - 12 The Tour de France or Kentucky Derby
 - 13 Noah's ship
 - 21 Shade of blond or gray
 - 22 He/him/_____
 - 25 Instagram vids
 - 26 "The Chronicles of Narnia" lion
 - 27 _____ Lama
 - 28 Santa's landing spot
 - 29 Get married like Romeo and Juliet
 - 30 Wafer brand
 - 31 Argon and krypton, for two
 - 32 Sports officials
 - 35 Opposing votes
 - 37 Romantasy or new adult
 - 38 "No Time To Die" actor Rami
 - 41 Imminent
 - 42 French region with beach resorts
 - 47 Monopoly piece
 - 49 Purple "Inside Out 2" emotion
 - 50 Jewish wedding dance
 - 51 Toy grabber in a machine
 - 52 Promise
 - 53 Heed
 - 54 Holes in knowledge
 - 55 "Exit full screen" key
 - 56 Zero
 - 59 Animation frame
 - 60 Tie-dyed shirt

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

S	L	I	M	W	E	L	D	S	G	N	U
A	U	D	I	A	T	E	I	T	M	O	O
G	R	A	N	D	A	D	D	Y	A	I	D
E	C	H	O	E	S	Y	E	A	R	N	E
S	H	O	R	E	C	E	O	H	O	G	
				M	U	U	M	U	M	O	N
B	R	O		G	R	U		T	E	N	U
R	E	D		P	H	D		B	U	D	T
A	N	D	E	A	N	E	A	R		S	O
G	O	O	D	L	O	O	K	I	N	G	
				N	I	A		V	E	T	
I	C	E	C	U	B	E		T	A	U	R
R	O	O	T		C	R	I	S	S	C	R
O	P	U	S		C	L	O	A	K	E	L
N	E	T			S	Y	N	C	S	S	L

12/4 Solution
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12/11 **Doubles Down by Frederick Lavoie**

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12
13					14						15		
16				17	○		○	○			18		
19								20		21			
22						23	24			25			
				26	27	○		○	28			29	30
31	32	33			34				35				
36				37					38			39	
40				41				42				43	
44	○	○				○	○			46			
				47			48			49	50	51	52
54	55				56				57				
58					59			60	61	○		○	○
62					63							64	
65					66								67

THURSDAY COMICS

Grosse Pointe News

Peanuts

Charles M. Schulz



Bizarro Dan Piraro and Wayno

Andy Capp

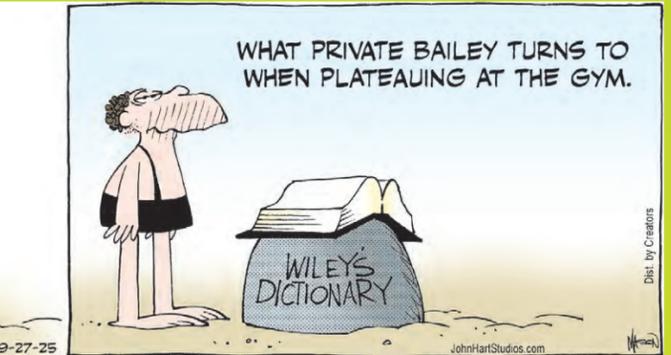
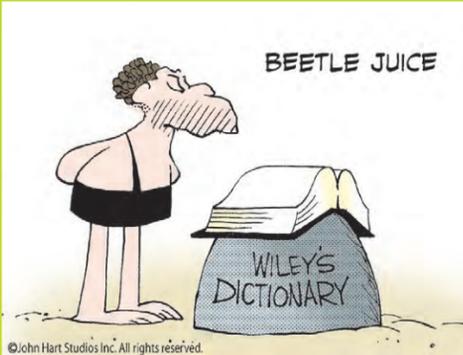
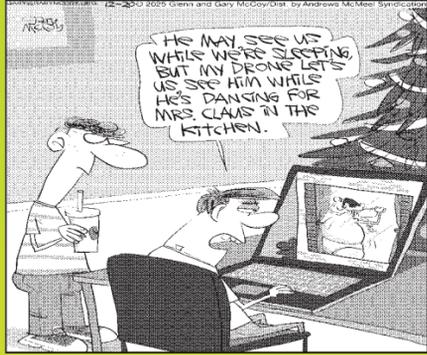
Reg Smythe



Flying McCoys Glenn McCoy

B.C.

Johnny Hart and Mason Mastroianni



Reality Check Dave Whamond

Beetle Bailey

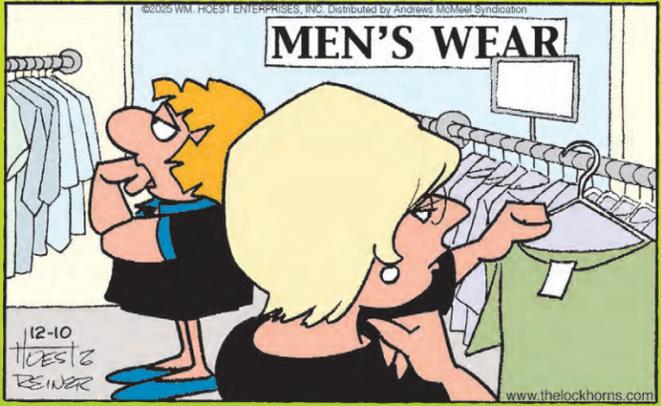
Greg, Brian, Neal and Mort Walker



The Lockhorns Bill Hoest, Bunny Hoest and John Reiner

Mother Goose and Grim

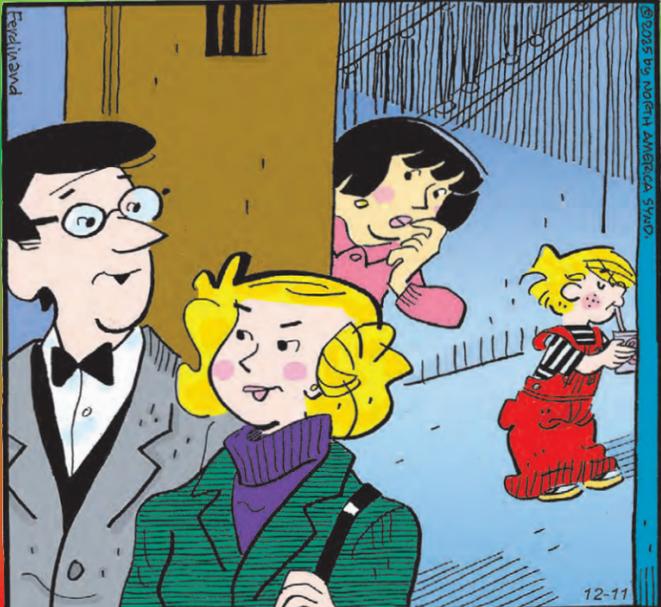
Mike Peters



Dennis the Menace Hank Ketchum, Scott Ketchum, Ron Ferdinand and Marcus Hamilton

Crankshaft

Tom Batiuk and Dan Davis



Carpe Diem

Niklas Eriksson



Wumo

Mikael Wulff and Anders Morgenthaler

"I WOULDN'T SAY HE'S 'USER-FRIENDLY'."





Garfield

Jim Davis



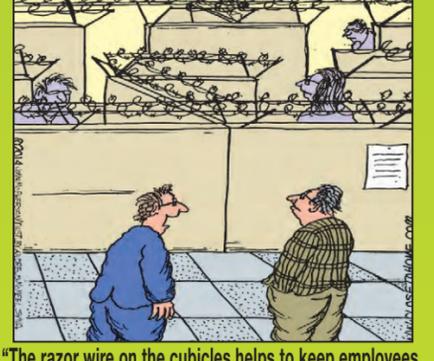
Hagar The Horrible

(Dik Browne & Chris Browne Original Creators)

Bob Webber Jr. and Gary Hallgren

Close To Home

John McPherson



Wizard of Id

Created by Brant Parker and Johnny Hart. Currently by Mason Mastroianni



Ziggy

Tom Wilson



Blondie

Chris and Dean Young



Over The Hedge

Michael Fry and T. Lewis



Crock

Created by Bill Rechin and Brant Parker



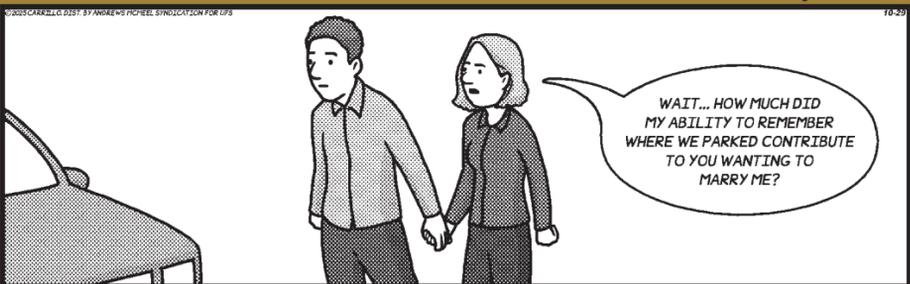
Popeye

Bud Sagendorf



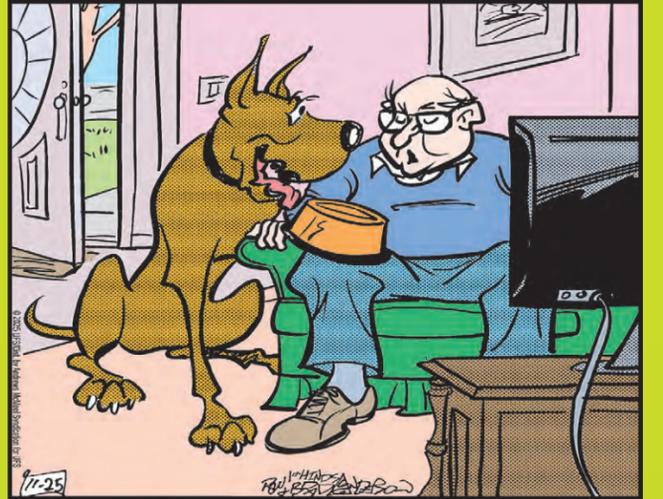
F Minus

Tony Carrilo



Marmaduke

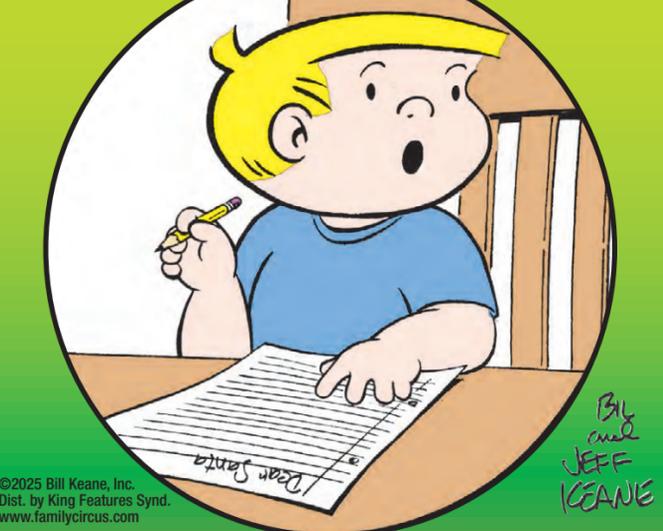
Paul & Brad Anderson



"Did you bring your food dish over here for any particular reason?"

Family Circus

Bill and Jeff Keane



"Do I say 'Dear Santa Claus' or should I just call him by his first name - 'Santa'?"



Kid Scoop

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Kid Scoop Together: Count Your Cash!

Fritter wants to buy each of the items below. Look at each item and its price. Figure out how he would pay for it. The first one is done for you.

Thrifty & Fritter Budgeting for the Holidays

Fritter, we're NOT going to go totally crazy during holiday shopping. We need to...

Oh, Thrifty! Just LOOK at all the sparkly lights and decorations!

WAHOOOO!!! I'm gonna get THIS and THAT and THOSE and THESE and...

Fritter, you really need a BUDGET!

Okay, but can you carry the budget? My arms are full!



Item: Pack of Cards

Price: \$2.50

To pay for it, I would use:

of dollar bills: 2
 # of pennies: _____
 # of nickels: 1
 # of dimes: 2
 # of quarters: 1

Item: Crayons

Price: \$3.59

To pay for it, I would use:

of dollar bills: _____
 # of pennies: _____
 # of nickels: _____
 # of dimes: _____
 # of quarters: _____

Item: Soccer Ball

Price: \$7.57

To pay for it, I would use:

of dollar bills: _____
 # of pennies: _____
 # of nickels: _____
 # of dimes: _____
 # of quarters: _____

Item: Scarf

Price: \$3.90

To pay for it, I would use:

of dollar bills: _____
 # of pennies: _____
 # of nickels: _____
 # of dimes: _____
 # of quarters: _____

Standards Link: Measurement: Students understand how different coins can be combined to equal the same amount.

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Kid Scoop VOCABULARY BUILDERS

This week's word: **BUDGET**

The noun **budget** means a plan for how much money will be spent and earned during a certain time period.

Lisa stuck carefully to her **budget** and saved enough money for a new bike.

Try to use the word **budget** in a sentence today when talking with your friends and family.

Write On!

A penny saved is a penny ...

How would you finish this sentence?

ANSWER: A river.

A budget is a plan that helps you to spend **only** the amount of money you can **afford**.

Shopping On A Budget

Look at the things Jodi would like to buy for her family. She has \$50 budgeted for her holiday shopping. Make a list of the things she could buy on her budget.



INCOME	
Allowance	\$15
Shovel Snow	\$20
Run Errands for Elves	\$15
TOTAL:	
EXPENSES	
Carrot Sticks	\$10
Flying Lessons	\$12
Reindeer Games Entry Fee	\$10
TOTAL:	

How much money does Thrifty have left over each month?

THINK ABOUT IT: What could Thrifty do to save more money each month?

Standards Link: Economics: Students understand basic concepts of managing money.



Standards Link: Number Sense: Solve real-world problems involving computations with dollars and cents.

Extra! Extra! Holiday Party Time!

Thrifty and Fritter are planning a holiday bash for family and friends. They have budgeted \$500 for the party.

They will need food, decorations and gifts. These are called **goods**.

They also need entertainment and perhaps folks to help set up and clean up. These are called **services**.

Look through today's newspaper and help Thrifty and Fritter find what they need. Stay within their \$500 budget!

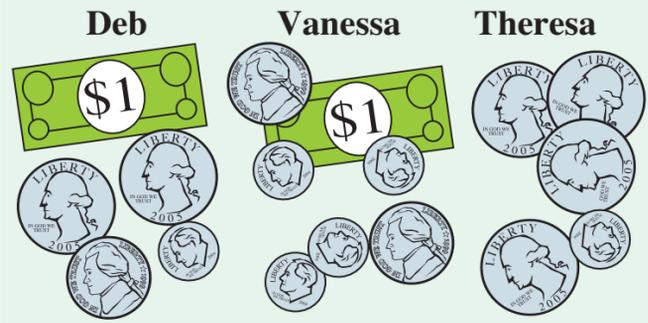
GOODS: _____

SERVICES: _____

Standards Link: Economics: Understand the differences between goods and services.

Kid Scoop Puzzler

Who bought what? An ice cream cone costs \$1.50. A comic book is \$1.65. A deck of cards is \$1.10. Count each person's money to see what they bought.



Standards Link: Mathematical Reasoning: Problem solving using money.

Double Double Word Search

THRIFTY
 SPARKLY
 SMART
 BUDGET
 HOLIDAY
 SAVE
 PARTY
 COMIC
 SALE
 MONEY
 SPEND
 GIFTS
 COUNT
 TIME
 PLAN

Find the words by looking up, down, backwards, forwards, sideways and diagonally.

T S Y E N O M M A S
 R E T A S D N E P S
 S H G T D S M A R T
 O P F D A I R P E R
 C I F V U K L S U Y
 G I E E L B S O T E
 A B M Y T F I R H T
 U I D O E L A S G E
 T N U O C P L A N T

Standards Link: Letter sequencing. Recognize identical words. Skim and scan reading. Recall spelling patterns.

FROM THE Kid Scoop LESSON LIBRARY

New and Used

Find five new items for sale in the newspaper. Chart the items and their prices. Can you find similar used items for sale? What is the difference in price? What are the advantages and disadvantages of buying new versus used?

Standards Link: Economics: Students demonstrate basic economic reasoning in terms of how individual economic choices involve trade-offs and the evaluation of costs and benefits.



What stays in bed most of the day but sometimes goes to the bank?

ANSWER: A river.

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PHOTO BY MIKE ADZIMA

Jamison Spratt steps up to the free throw line for South against Notre Dame Prep in the Blue Devils' win Friday, Dec. 5. Spratt finished the game with 14 points.

South starts hot in first week of boys hoops season

By Mike Adzima
 Sports Reporter

The varsity boys basketball season tipped off around the state last week and teams around the Pointes took the court for their first matchups of the winter. For Grosse Pointe South, the opening week of the season brought some challenges, but also a couple of big wins, including a dominant 70-43 victory over Notre Dame Prep in the Blue Devils' home opener Friday, Dec. 5.

It was a second consecutive win by 25 points or more for South, as the Blue Devils beat Romeo 84-49 on the road their first game of the season Tuesday, Dec. 2. South came into its home opener against Notre Dame Prep last Friday looking strong from the start, building a 22-6 lead by the end of the

first quarter.

The offensive momentum South built in the opening eight minutes slowed down in the second quarter. However, the Blue Devils held off the Irish from making up any significant ground. The lead for South stood at 15 by halftime, 34-19.

The second half was all Blue Devils. South's balanced and spread-out scoring attack shut down Notre Dame Prep in the second half, as the lead for the Blue Devils grew to more than 20 by the end of the third quarter on the way to winning the game by nearly 30 points.

South got contributions from nearly everyone in last Friday's victory. Kooper Richards and Jamison Spratt each finished with 14 points. Sam Conn also reached double digits with 10 points. Quinn Steinhebel finished with nine, while

Ted Kuras tallied eight points.

The Blue Devils then had to make a quick turnaround after the win to play the next day, Saturday, Dec. 6, in the Horatio Williams Tip Off Classic. South was matched up against Detroit Edison and suffered its first loss of the season, 59-47. Charlie Michelotti scored 15 points in the loss and Spratt tallied 14.

After going 2-1 in the first week of the season, the Blue Devils head into the second week of action facing what could be some challenging matchups on the road. South visited Eisenhower after press time Wednesday, Dec. 10. The Blue Devils travel across town for a rivalry showdown against Grosse Pointe North Friday, Dec. 12. Tip off is scheduled for 7 p.m. at North.

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Welsh brings veteran leadership for new era of ULS girls hockey

By Mike Adzima
 Sports Reporter

At the end of her junior season last winter, Avery Welsh was unsure she would get to experience her senior season with the University Liggett School varsity girls hockey team. The Knights had to find enough players to field a team for the 2025-26 season.

They did, with some players from last year's team returning and athletes from other sports deciding to try things out on the ice.

The team came together and now Welsh gets to spend one more season playing the sport she loves alongside some of her closest friends, all while being a team captain.

"I'm grateful that we have this team this year because there was a time and a point where we didn't know if we would have enough players to have this hockey team," Welsh said. "... I give all of the girls who just started playing this year and

have come back to the sport so much credit, because they're what made this team happen. ... We all just want to keep getting better together."

Getting to spend her senior season as a captain is especially important to Welsh. She has been with the Liggett team since her freshman year, playing alongside and learning from some of the leaders who helped cement the Knights as one of the state's most prominent girls hockey programs. Now, it is up to her and her fellow captains to continue setting that standard for the next



PHOTO BY LEON HALIP

Avery Welsh

generation of Liggett hockey.

"I've been on this team for four years and to be able to be one of the leaders means a lot," Welsh said. "I've seen all of the other captains before me take on this big role. Having my co-captain, Madeline Hexter, and our two assistant captains, Stella Smiatacz and Caroline Krall, with me has been great support."

Welsh is taking her responsibility as a leader both on and off the ice, trying to propel the Knights to victory. Her six goals and six assists give her a team-leading 12 points through the first six games of the season.

Even though she likely would trade any statistical achievements for more wins for her

team, it is undeniable that Welsh is one of Liggett's most talented scorers. Her skill and natural ability on the ice have grown over the years and made her one of the players

opponents fear most when going up against the Knights.

"We have some amazing forwards and it really starts with our captain, Avery," Liggett girls hockey head coach Jonathan Yanovsky said. "She's really fast and she has great hands and great skill."

Welsh's skill can help the Knights in their

effort to get back to the mountaintop of girls hockey in Michigan. Welsh has experienced what it is like to get there, winning a state championship with the Knights her freshman season. She also has experienced times like last season, when the Knights were sent home early in the playoffs.

To Welsh, it almost feels like her career at Liggett has been split into two different eras—being part of a state championship team and part of a program trying to rebuild to get back to competing for titles. All

Grosse Pointe News

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Avery Welsh
 School: University Liggett
 Sport: Hockey

Sponsored by Pointe Capital Management

Amazing Avery

- Leads ULS girls hockey with 12 points (6 G, 6 A) through 6 games
- Named first team All-State by MGHSHL in 2024-25
- Senior captain of ULS girls hockey this season

See ATHLETE, page 2D

TECH TIPS

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GROSSE POINTE SOUTH

Boys Varsity Swim & Dive

Young core looks to meet high expectations for Blue Devils

By Mike Adzima
Sports Reporter

The Grosse Pointe South varsity boys swim and dive program always holds itself to a certain standard of success. Winning 27 consecutive MAC Red Division titles certainly shows that. This year, the weight of that success rests largely on the shoulders of younger swimmers who could have the talent to match the program's expectations.

"It's a good team and it's a young team," South boys swim and dive coach John Fodell said. "Our sophomore class is probably our most solid class, which will help carry us for a couple of years. It's a young team, but we'll battle because the MAC (Red) might be a battle this year."

The Blue Devils might face some of their toughest challenges in the division in some time. They expect to be tested along



PHOTO BY ERIC CERESA

Everett Wood, one of a large group of sophomores leading the way for South this winter, swims the breast stroke in a meet last season.

the way and will have to bring a big race mentality into almost every meet — especially ones against MAC Red Division foes like Dakota and Grosse

Pointe North. However, as Fodell said, it could be up to a deep group of sophomores to help South overcome those tests.

Top sophomores include Brady Bond, who finished in the top 10 in the 50 freestyle at the state finals last season, along with Everett Wood,

Christian Azouray, Joseph Fodell and Sam Xia. The team also has some juniors, such as Lucas Curtis and Nadeem Haurani, who could play big roles as well. It also has eight seniors this year to provide strong veteran leadership.

The biggest advantage South has seen so far in the build-up to the season is the growth in team chemistry, with everyone seeming willing to work hard for themselves and for their teammates.

"It's a good team culture," Fodell said. "Everyone is coming and getting to business and doing what we're supposed to do. We definitely have some young, newer swimmers that we're going to have to bring along. We're going to have to rely on our depth a little more than normal to do what we've done."

The veterans are going to play a part in helping Fodell, who was recently

named Division 2 coach of the year for leading the South girls swim and dive team to a second-place finish in the state, and the coaching staff bring the youth on this team up to full speed. The biggest thing they have been preaching so far is consistency and improvement from day one, because everyone needs to be at their best when it comes time for the MAC and state finals.

"We've got to have big races and learn how to race big," Fodell said. "... You're not going to get where you want to be at the end of the season unless you're consistent. You've got to put the work in now and start doing a lot of work. If we don't, then we won't be ready at the end of the season. Be smart, be healthy and stay consistent."

The Blue Devils open the season Thursday, Dec. 11, with a meet at Lakeview.

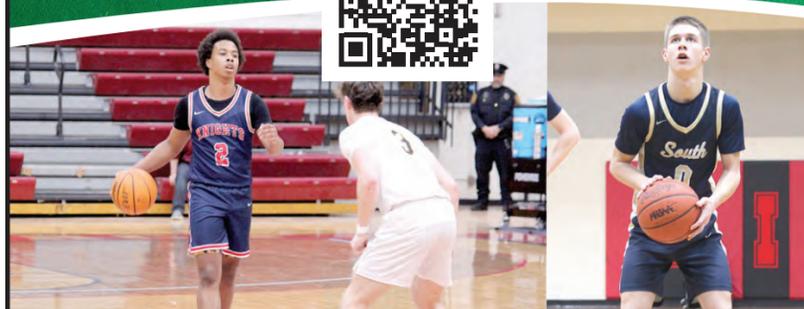


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Our page is dedicated to providing fans around the Pointes and beyond with the latest news and features surrounding Grosse Pointe North, Grosse Pointe South and University Liggett sports.

Best of all, you can be part of the action too! Send your best sports photos and moments to our DMs for a chance to be featured on our page and in the sports section of the Grosse Pointe News. Follow us today!



ATHLETE:

Continued from page 1D

of those experiences have helped her become a perfect leader for the program.

"Having someone who's played on both types of teams might be supportive for anyone who might not have experience with the sport itself and needs someone to look up to," she said. "I want to lead by example and be that support for them."

Welsh is willing to

step up as a leader and support every one of her teammates. Her chemistry with many of them goes beyond just ice hockey, as Welsh is one of a few players on Liggett's girls ice hockey team in the winter who also is part of the school's field hockey team in the fall.

Having some teammates with whom she already had a full field hockey season in the fall helped Welsh and the Knights have a smoother transition into the ice hockey season. What

means the most to Welsh is that their chemistry continues to improve throughout the year. Wins and losses are one thing, but if Welsh can help build Liggett girls hockey for future generations and keep the team feeling like family, it would make her senior year complete.

"All of these girls are like my family," she said. "Being able to play so many sports with all of them makes our bond even more special and it translates to the outcome we have on the



PHOTO BY LEON HALIP

Avery Welsh currently leads University Liggett girls hockey in points through six games this winter and was named first team All-State for the 2024-25 season by the Michigan Girls High School Hockey League.



GROSSE POINTE NORTH

Boys Varsity Swim & Dive

North focused on success under new leadership

By Mike Adzima
Sports Reporter

The 2025-26 season for the Grosse Pointe North varsity boys swim and dive program brings a mix of both new and the familiar. The Norsemen will be under new leadership with a new head coach taking over the helm this winter, but have several experienced swimmers returning to build on their performances from last season.

The team's new head coach this season is Carl Scozzari. He previously served as the head coach of the boys swim and dive team at Warren Fitzgerald and the girls swim and dive team at Center Line High School. Scozzari also is plenty familiar with the Grosse Pointe swimming culture, as he has worked with the swim programs at the Detroit Yacht Club and Lakefront Swimming Association.

Taking over the program at North presents a new challenge for Scozzari, but one he is eager to take on starting this winter.

"Transitioning to Grosse Pointe, where swimming is a bit more

fluent throughout the community, I have to be a bit more analytical about my approach and that's actually way more fun for me," he said. "I'm building these certain sets, but with intent and purpose. Each practice, we're gradually increasing yards and getting them back up to where they were last season and developing some discipline and attitude and consistency that will help them in the journey through the season."

Helping Scozzari as an assistant coach will be Ian Donahue, a former All-State swimmer for the Norsemen from the class of 2022. They inherit a group that includes some new swimmers, but plenty of veterans who are eager to get back in the pool for North.

Some of the biggest contributors from which the Norsemen will expect big things are the three captains — seniors James Gusmano, Paul Stephens and Alejandro Delgado. Junior Brady Winbigler also should be one of the top swimmers to watch this season, as he, Gusmano and Stephens were among the Norsemen who made appearances



PHOTO BY ERIN COLLINS

From left, Paul Stephens, James Gusmano, Tyler Collins, James Jewell and Brady Winbigler represented North at the Division 2 state finals last season and all return to the roster to swim again this winter.

at the state finals last winter.

Getting back to states is a goal for them and others, but it will be a long process throughout the winter to get there. Scozzari wants his swimmers to stay focused on developing day by day and remembering that results are only part of what matters.

"Our goal is to compete with intention, develop some state-

level performers and create a team culture that raises the standard for what Grosse Pointe North swimming can mean in the community," Scozzari said. "At the same time, I want this program to be fun and rewarding. We'll celebrate the process, big and small, and create an atmosphere where everyone feels valued and can find success."

The attitude Scozzari

has seen his swimmers bring from the first day of practice gives him confidence that that culture can thrive. The Norsemen will have plenty of tough tests throughout the season in the MAC Red Division, going against competition like Dakota and rival Grosse Pointe South, but the team's athletes seem committed to the process of competing every day.

"It's really cool that

everyone really shows up ready to work," he said. "They're all committed to improving every single day and holding themselves, and even me, to a higher standard."

North began the season after press time Tuesday, Dec. 9, with a meet against Allen Park. The Norsemen will be in the water again Thursday, Dec. 11, as they travel to take on Anchor Bay.

GROSSE POINTE SOUTH

Varsity Wrestling

South wrestling hopes growth continues program's legacy

By Mike Adzima
Sports Reporter

Grosse Pointe South varsity wrestling has experienced some of its best moments in program history over the past few years. The Blue Devils recently had their first-ever state champion and multiple All-State wrestlers who helped take South wrestling to new heights. Now the program looks to build on that success with a new crop of promising athletes.

The biggest thing recent success has done for the program is raise interest in a sport that could use more growth. The Blue Devils have one of their biggest teams ever this winter, with new wrestlers and experienced veterans all focused on continuing to boost the profile of South wrestling.

"This is the largest team we've rostered in a long time, as far as I can remember being around the program,"

South wrestling coach Dave Salazar said. "... A lot of underclassmen, younger, first-year wrestlers, but also a healthy upperclassmen mix as well. We've got about 30 kids and we're able to fill all the weight classes. It's really exciting."

While some of the younger wrestlers on the team still are unlocking their potential, the Blue Devils have upperclassmen leadership who could add to the program's list of accolades this season. Seniors Mason Zents and Sage Suson could win some big matches throughout the winter, while juniors such as Liam Willson, Throop Linnell, Matt Duso and Jeffrey Hermann all could be poised for breakout seasons.

"A lot of them have put in a bunch of work in the offseason," Salazar said. "A lot of them played football. A lot went to wrestling

camp or did club wrestling and stuff over the summer. I'm really looking forward to seeing that hard work pay off and I'm sure some of them will even surprise me and exceed our expectations."

The hard work and dedication to wrestling South's athletes have built partly were inspired by the teammates from whom they learned in recent years. Athletes like Wyatt Hepner, Lex Willson, Neil Honablu and Paul Wilson may have graduated from the program at South, but left a legacy that set the standard for the wrestlers this year and in the future.

"They were around over the Thanksgiving break and some of them would stop by the (wrestling) room because that legacy and that culture has grown interest for the sport," Salazar said. "... A lot of kids in that era that were maybe a freshman

or sophomore are looking to pick up where those guys left off and continue the tradition of solid South wres-

ting."

The Blue Devils began the season with a quad invitational Thursday, Dec. 4. South traveled

across town for the Battle of the Pointes against Grosse Pointe North after press time Wednesday, Dec. 10.

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HITS & HIGHLIGHTS

Whether it's games, meets or matches, school fall sports in the Pointes are in full swing and the Grosse Pointe News is here to bring you all the action. Some of the week's biggest hits and highlights from include:

TOURNEY CHAMPS!

The St. Clare of Montefalco 5th grade boys basketball team took home first place in the annual St. Clare Thanksgiving Tournament championship. The Falcons advanced to the tournament championship with wins over St. Michael's and St. Joseph's before defeating St. Lawrence 27-17 in the final. Pictured: Drew Krall, Tommy Fannon, Coach Greg Fannon, Eddie Schwartz, Stevens Ezell, Henry Simaika, Luke Reno, Elliott Kuhl and Sebastian Wdziekonski.



COURTESY PHOTO



BOYS VARSITY BASKETBALL

The University Liggett School varsity boys basketball team lost its season opener last Friday, Dec. 5, falling 60-35 at home to Southfield Christian. The Knights hosted Cardinal Mooney after press time Tuesday, Dec. 9, and will travel on the road to face Parkway Christian Friday, Dec. 12.

The varsity boys basketball squad from Grosse Pointe North lost twice in its first action of the season last week. The Norsemen dropped a close season-opening game 55-51 against Warren Woods-Tower last Tuesday, Dec. 2. North then hosted Bloomfield Hills last Friday, Dec. 5, losing 62-31. North is scheduled to host crosstown rival Grosse Pointe South Friday, Dec. 12, at 7 p.m.

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Grosse Pointe News Estate Sale Map



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Pointer brings Michigan football history to life with new novel

By Mike Adzima
Sports Reporter

Whether one is a sports fan or not, it is hard to find anyone in the state of Michigan who does not know the importance of the college football rivalry between the University of Michigan and Ohio State University. The rivalry is deeply rooted in the history and tradition of two of college football's most storied programs.

Now a Grosse Pointe Farms native's new book is helping tell the story of one of the rivalry's greatest moments.

Grosse Pointe South alumnus and former U-M football player Brian Letscher has released his

new book "HAIL! Those Who Stayed." The novel takes a historical fiction approach to tell the story of the 1969 Michigan football season, the first under legendary head coach Bo Schembechler, ultimately building to the Wolverines' upset victory over undefeated Ohio State that November.

"Our strength and conditioning coach, Mike Gittleston, used to talk about old teams and he spoke a lot about that team," Letscher said about when he was first inspired by the story of the 1969 Michigan team. "I remember him at the time saying, 'This would make a great movie.' ... The story always stuck with me and, as I got into

the entertainment world and started writing and creating shows and things like that, I became really interested in this as something that I knew."

Letscher played football at Grosse Pointe South and eventually at Michigan, where he was a member of the Wolverines' 1993 Rose Bowl team. He then spent a few years on the football coaching staffs at Indiana University and Eastern Michigan University before shifting his focus to the world of entertainment.

Letscher traded in his clipboard for a notepad and began pursuing a career as a writer and actor. He has appeared on the screen in feature films and notable television series such as "Scandal," "Valor" and "9-1-1: Lone Star." He also has written plays including "When the Lights Come On" and "Smart Love," with the latter receiving a Critics' Choice honor from the LA Times.

"There wasn't a lot of time to explore other things, but acting gave me that," Letscher said about his transition from football to the entertainment world. "I had a real curiosity about the world and the human experience. Acting, and consequently writing, sparked that."

Letscher's experience as a writer for the stage and screen can be felt in his new novel. He puts a strong emphasis on dialogue and conversations to tell the story of the 1969 season and game against Ohio State, using extensive research and interviews with those who lived it to bring the story to life.

"It interested me a lot more to be able to create

these conversations and do them in the spirit of those people," Letscher said, "not changing anything dramatically and trying to get a sense of their voice and what their personality was and trying to represent them truthfully. It was a lot more exciting to me to be able to write these scenes and hear them speak to each other and what might have been said."

"HAIL! Those Who Stayed" takes its inspiration from one of Coach Schembechler's famous sayings, "Those who stay will be champions." Another famous Schembechler mantra that has stuck with the program and with Letscher for many years is, "The Team, The Team, The Team."

That inspired Letscher to be part of something bigger than himself as part of the Michigan football family. Being able to tell the story of one of the most turbulent and transformative periods in Michigan football history feels like his own way of giving back to the program. A portion of all sales from the book will be donated to Football Alumni of Michigan, a nonprofit organization that helps provide services and resources for Michigan football alumni.

The responses Letscher has received from his fellow Michigan football family members regarding the novel have been strong, especially from the members of the 1969 team who told Letscher their stories to help make the novel possible.

"It's been phenomenal," Letscher said about the novel's reception. "... The people who know love it and that's one of the reasons why I wrote the book. I got to inter-



COURTESY PHOTOS

Actor, writer and Grosse Pointe Farms native Brian Letscher is the author of the new book "HAIL! Those Who Stayed."

view these guys and they were amazing people and this was the seminal time in their lives."

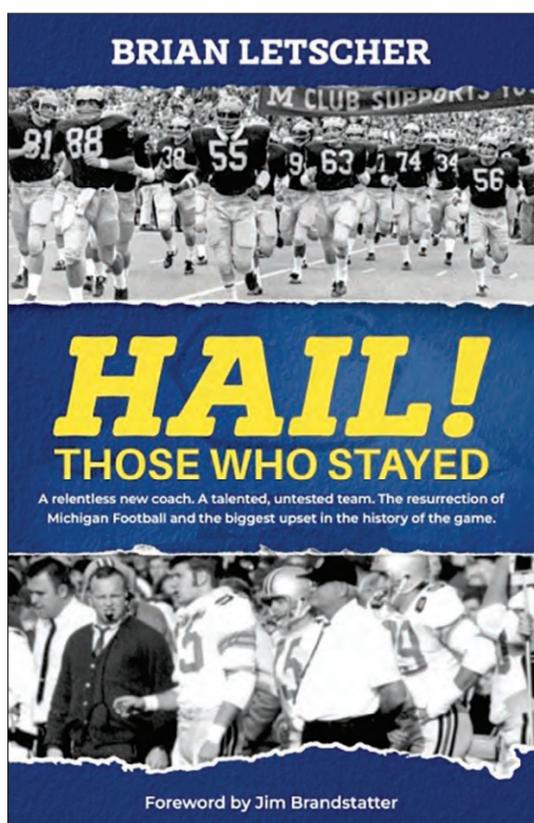
"HAIL! Those Who Stayed" shares an insight into the past and one of Michigan football's most important victories in program history. However, the timing of the novel also relates heavily to the current climate of "The Game" between Michigan and Ohio State.

Michigan dominated the rivalry the past few years, but the momentum has seemingly shifted back in the Buckeyes' favor after their victory this season. The rivalry between the two teams will always be fierce and relevant as one of the best rivalries in all of sports and Letscher's

novel about the 1969 matchup should remind readers of what the atmosphere is like today whenever the Wolverines and Buckeyes meet.

"The 1969 win kicked off the 'Ten-Year War' and it completely reignited that rivalry," said Letscher. "... I feel like we're entering similar territory here, where that win for Michigan a few years ago sort of did the same thing and kicked off the rivalry. Them beating us the way they did this year ... it has definitely kicked off this rivalry in a massive way. It's going to be big for a long time and I love it."

"HAIL! Those Who Stayed" is available for purchase in eBook and paperback editions on Amazon.com.



"HAIL! Those Who Stayed" tells the story of the 1969 University of Michigan football season, the first under legendary coach Bo Schembechler, ultimately leading to the Wolverines' historic upset win over Ohio State.



PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT JESUIT HIGH SCHOOL

We are Marshall! Farms native joins Thundering Herd

Grosse Pointe Farms native and University of Detroit Jesuit High School senior Riley Winkler, pictured with parents Jodi McKay and Jeffrey Winkler, made his gridiron future official last week by signing on to play college football at Marshall University in West Virginia. Winkler played three years of varsity football for the Cubs and will join the program at Marshall as a long snapper.